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THE

WORKS

OF

SAMUEL HOPKINS, D. D.,

FIRST PASTOR OF

THE CHURCH IN GREAT BARRINGTON, MASS.,

AFTERWARDS PASTOR OF

THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH IN NEWPORT, R. I.

WITH

A MEMOIR OF HIS LIFE AND CHARACTER.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

BOSTON:
DOCTRINAL TRACT AND BOOK SOCIETY.
1854.

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1773

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AN INQUIRY

INTO

THE NATURE OF TRUE HOLINESS.

WITH

AN APPENDIX,

CONTAINING

AN ANSWER TO THE REV. MR. WILLIAM HART'S REMARKS ON PRESIDENT EDWARDS'S DISSERTATION ON "THE NATURE OF TRUE VIRTUE;"

AND,

BRIEF REMARKS ON SOME THINGS THE REV. MR. MATHER HAS LATELY PUBLISHED.

ALSO,

AN ANSWER TO THE REV. MR. HEMMENWAY'S VINDICATION.

PREFACE.

Since holiness is, by the confession of all, the sum of all moral excellence and the highest and most necessary attainment, it is of the last importance that we should well understand its nature, and distinguish it from all counterfeits. This will help us to understand the Bible, to form right conceptions of the divine perfections, and distinguish true religion from that which is false. Wrong conceptions of the distinguishing nature of holiness lead to all kinds of delusion in religion. And, on the other hand, just and clear apprehensions of this are the best preservative from fatal mistakes, and have the happiest tendency to remove the difference and opposition in sentiments, and the sad divisions so common among professing Christians, and to bring them to "speak the same thing, and be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment."

The more I have attended to the religious controversies of this day among us, the more have I been convinced that our different sentiments chiefly originate either from too great inattention to the nature of holiness, or very different apprehensions about it; and that the real question is, What is God's moral character? What is conformity to it? What opposes it? Were we agreed in this, most of these disputes would subside. In this view, they are far from being trifling, and deserving that neglect and contempt with which many

affect to treat them, but appear interesting, important, and worthy the attention of all.

I humbly conceive there has been too little attention to the nature of holiness among divines in general, and that a proper and intelligible definition of it is not easily to be found in bodies of divinity or elsewhere. And most of those who think it a very easy matter to tell what holiness is, and that we are all agreed in this, have been contented with a set of words which express no distinct ideas, but leave the thing wholly in the dark. They will perhaps say, God's holiness is his purity. If it is asked, In what does this purity consist? the common answer is, In that which is opposite to all sin, the greatest impurity. We have now got what, I think, is the most common definition of holiness. But who is the wiser? This does not help us to any idea of this purity, unless we know what sin is. But this cannot be known so long as we know not what holiness is; for we do not learn what holiness is by first obtaining the idea of sin, but we must first know what holiness, or, which is the same, what the divine law is, in order to the knowledge of sin.

Some have attempted to tell what holiness is, by saying, It is not properly a distinct attribute of God, but the beauty and glory of all God's moral perfections. But we get no idea by these words till we are told what is this beauty and glory. To say it is holiness is saying nothing, or that which is no better.

Under a conviction of this too general inattention to the nature of holiness — the great defect in the most common descriptions of it — the importance of distinct and clear ideas of it — that the controversies before us turn chiefly upon this, and will be decided the shortest and best way, by determining what holiness is, I present to the public the following inquiry, hoping it may give some light on the subject, and assist such as are willing to inquire into the nature of holiness, as described in divine revelation; and in the light of this, help them to find on which side the truth lies in the present controversies.

In this, however, I do not pretend to be an original. President Edwards, in his dissertation on the nature of true

virtue, has given the same account of holiness for substance, though under a different name, which the reader will find in the following inquiry. All I can pretend to, as an improvement on him, is to have explained some things more fully than he did, and more particularly stated the opposition of holiness to self-love, and shown that this representation of holiness is agreeable to the Scripture; and to have answered some objections he has not mentioned, and made a number of inferences.

As Mr. Hart had published objections against Mr. Edwards's account of the nature of true virtue; it seemed necessary they should be considered and obviated. This I have done in an appendix, that what puts on the air of controversy might be by itself, and at the same time have the advantage of the foregoing inquiry.

As Mr. Mather had published something respecting self-love, which appeared very contrary to the nature of holiness, and on this ground objected to Mr. Edwards's account of a holy taste, and to some things wrote by me, some brief remarks on him are subjoined to detect the fallacy of his scheme, and show that his objections are groundless.

When Mr. Hemmenway's vindication made its appearance, several reasons, the principal of which is mentioned in the introduction, induced me to answer him in an appendix; whence the book exceeds the size at first proposed.

However disagreeable these disputes are in themselves, and offensive to many, I have the satisfaction to think they have already been of great advantage to truth, and the pleasure of believing they will yet be more so, if protracted. When in this sense many run to and fro, knowledge will be increased.

There are those, I know, who, in their own apprehensions, dwell in superior light, looking down with pity, if not resentment and contempt, upon those concerned in these disputes, as doing much mischief — contending in the dark about they know not what — disputing about words, and are too wise so much as to read any of these controversial writings, being possessed of the happy talent of determining all these matters without any of this trouble, or much thought. We are willing

such should know we do not envy their superior knowledge and wisdom, and think they would not give less evidence of them, were they willing to be at the pains of hearing the matter before they answer.

The author wishes that peace, truth, and holiness may be promoted by these efforts; and that they may in some measure conduce to bring on the happy era, when "the knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall fill the earth, as the waters cover the sea;" and "there shall be upon the bells of the horses, Holiness unto the Lord."

May every reader remember, that whatever are his speculations, and which side soever of the disputed questions he takes, yet without holiness no man shall see the Lord. And let him who reads, and is in any measure enlightened and strengthened in the way of holiness by what is now offered to his perusal, bless God and give all the glory to HIM.

NEWPORT, *June* 2, 1773.

AN INQUIRY

INTO

THE NATURE OF TRUE HOLINESS.

SECTION I.

General Introductory Observations.

I. Holiness is, in all respects, perfectly consistent with right reason, and agreeable to its dictates; or reason, properly exercised and improved, will, in all cases, and without fail, determine holiness to be what it really is. However vitiated the taste may be, and the heart disrelish, hate, and oppose true holiness, the same person's reason and judgment may pronounce it to be holiness. Though the reason of man is liable to be blinded and prejudiced by the vicious taste and reigning lusts of his heart, and often is so to an amazing degree, yet it is not always and necessarily so blinded, but may, and often does, dictate the truth in this matter, and always does when reason is properly exercised. Hence, men of corrupt minds, enemies to holiness in heart and practice, may reason well about the nature of holiness, and be able to prove what it consists in by incontestable arguments. Hence the propriety of reasoning on this subject. And we may be sure that so far as we reason right, and find what reason dictates, we have found the truth.

II. Holiness is that in which the highest enjoyment or happiness consists, and is really the greatest good in the universe. It, in a sense and degree, puts us in possession of all good. That, therefore, which gives true enjoyment, and tends to the highest, perfect, universal good of intelligent beings, is true holiness, and nothing else can be worthy of that name.

It is true that holiness may be the occasion of misery, and a perfectly holy being may not be perfectly happy in certain

peculiar circumstances; as the imperfect holiness of the saints in this life is the occasion of pain and distress of mind which no unholy person can have, and Christ in the human nature, though perfectly holy, was subject to great pain and sufferings. But this is not properly owing to any thing in the nature and tendency of holiness, but the peculiar circumstances which attend it. Therefore, those exercises of mind which give a being the highest enjoyment his nature is capable of, and put him in possession of all possible good, and at the same time promote the greatest happiness of the whole, is true holiness. And those exercises which have not this nature, but the contrary, are opposed to holiness.

III. Holiness is the highest possible excellence in the universe. It is that in which the highest and most perfect beauty and all real worth do summarily consist. It is in such a sense and degree the excellence and perfection of intelligent beings, that without it they have no real excellence nor any true worth, but they are, in themselves, odious, despicable, and worse than nothing. The more they have of natural capacity, powers, and endowments, if they have no holiness, the farther they are from all real excellence, and the more hateful, because they, not being holy, are of course more opposed to holiness, or have more of that which is moral evil than beings of less natural capacities could have.

If holiness could be banished from the universe, considered as comprehending Creator and creatures, and should actually cease, there would be no real excellence or worth in universal existence; but it would be in truth infinitely worse than universal nothing. Holiness is the beauty, excellence, brightness, glory, and perfection of God, by whatever name it is called. And this is true of all intelligent creatures. Therefore, if we can find what true moral beauty, worth, or excellence is, it will determine what is holiness.

IV. Holiness is that by which intelligent beings are united together in the highest, most perfect, and beautiful union. It consists in that harmony of affection and union of heart by which the intelligent system becomes *one*, so far as holiness prevails; which fixes every being, by his own inclination and choice, in his proper place, so as in the best manner to promote the good of the whole. There is no moral beauty or happiness among intelligent beings without harmony and union of heart. All sin is opposed to this; it sets intelligences in opposition to each other, and spreads the most disagreeable, unhappy discord. But holiness unites them; it consists in the highest and most excellent kind of union in nature. It is the most excellent and perfect bond by which intelligent beings

are, by their own voluntary exertions, united and cemented together in the strongest and most happy manner. If we can, with any degree of certainty, then, determine what affection of heart that is which thus unites intelligent beings, we may be equally certain that we have found the object of our inquiry, viz., true holiness.

V. Holiness is essentially, in nature and kind, the same thing in all beings that are capable of it. Holiness in God is not different in nature and kind from the holiness of creatures. God's holiness differs from the holiness of creatures in degree, and in circumstances, or in mode and form, agreeably to the infinite degree of his excellence, and the different manner and circumstances in which he exists, but is of the same nature, and so essentially the same thing in both. We have the greatest certainty of this, in that holiness in the creature is, in Scripture, called the image of God, and that by which they partake of the divine nature, and is represented to be the Holy Spirit of God, or God's holiness, dwelling and acting in them, by which God dwells in them, and they dwell in God.

Holiness in different creatures may also differ in some circumstances, and in the particular form and manner of its exercises, owing to their very different state, relations, and circumstances. Thus, the holiness of creatures who never have sinned is, in some respects, as to the form and manner of its exercises, different from the holiness of those who have sinned, and being redeemed by Christ are recovered to holiness. And in this lies the difference between what is called legal holiness and evangelical holiness; the former being the holiness of angels and of man before he sinned, the latter is the holiness of those who are redeemed from among men. This difference might easily be pointed out; but this will not be attempted here, as we are inquiring into the general nature of true holiness. This, I say, is the same in all creatures, and therefore has but one and the same rule, the law of God, and consists in conformity to that.

Therefore, if we can find what is the nature of divine holiness, we may be certain that we have found what is the holiness of creatures, and so *vice versa*. This, therefore, must be kept in mind, as what may be of use in our inquiry.

VI. True holiness is, in its own nature, one simple, uncompounded thing. It is not made up of different and various kinds of exercises, properties, and ingredients, which may exist distinct and separate, or in any degree independent of each other, and being put together make one compound; but, in opposition to this, is perfectly simple and uncompounded.

This is most certainly true of the divine holiness. And if

holiness in creatures is of the same nature and kind, being a participation of the divine nature, and consists in the Spirit of God imparted to the soul, and dwelling in it, which is the scriptural representation of the matter, as has been observed, then this must be true of creature holiness.

Holiness is in Scripture called life; it is indeed the highest and most perfect kind of life. Now, life is one simple thing. It is not compounded of different things, and made up of various parts, which differ in nature and kind, and do not imply and involve the whole. This may receive some illustration, perhaps, from animal life. This, as it appears in exercises towards different objects, in various circumstances, and by different senses, sight, taste, hearing, etc., is called by different names; but it is the same simple, uncompounded thing in its nature, and in all its exercises. It is the same animal life, in whatever form or name it appears. Every property and motion is the motion and property of this same life, and implies the whole. So holiness, though it has obtained different names, as it is exercised in different circumstances and towards different objects, is the same most simple, undivided spiritual life. This remark may be of use in the inquiry we are entering upon.*

VII. The nature and distinguishing properties of true holiness are so clearly described in the Holy Scriptures, that nothing is needed but to understand the most important truths revealed there, in order to know what true holiness is, as distinguished from all counterfeits. It is one chief end of divine revelation to make known and ascertain the distinguishing nature of true holiness. The great end of divine revelation is to make known the true God to man, and manifest his glory; especially to reveal his moral perfections, which is his glory. And this is the same with his holiness; for this is all the moral perfection in the universe. And so far as the Bible reveals the duty and happiness of man, which is doubtless done with all possible clearness, and in the wisest and best manner, just so far is the nature of true holiness revealed; for in this both the duty and happiness of man consist. Therefore, he only understands his Bible who has learned what is true holiness; and he who is ignorant of the nature and properties of this is blind to the most leading, important things

* It has been said that "virtue is a complex thing. It does not primarily consist in one single disposition, tendency, or affection of mind, all other affections rising out of that as their root, but includes various affections, equally original and essential to virtue." But not the least probable evidence of this assertion has been offered or even attempted, so far as I have observed. — See *Mr. Hart's Remarks on President Edwards.*

contained in divine revelation. He knows not God; he is ignorant of the divine law, and the gospel of Jesus Christ, and his own true interest. The Bible is, indeed, a sealed book to him, and he is in darkness even until now. But he who has a true idea of holiness, knoweth him who is holy in all his works. He understands the gospel, and walketh in the light. This at once shows how important the inquiry is which we are entering upon, and the great help we may expect from the Bible in determining this question, and consequently the reasonableness and importance of attending constantly to that in all our inquiries of this nature.

These observations being kept in view, will greatly help us in our inquiry into the nature of true holiness, and serve as landmarks to direct us. If reason, when properly improved, will direct us to it; if it is that alone in which true happiness consists, and which tends to the greatest general good; if it is the highest, the supreme beauty and excellence, that in which all the real worth of intelligences consists, and without which the intellectual, moral world would be infinitely worse than nothing; if it unites intelligent beings together in the most amiable, happy manner, and degree, and is the only bond of such union; if it is, in its nature, one simple thing, so that if we can find what is any one thing which comes into the nature of holiness, or any thing which is properly a branch of holiness, we have found in that every thing essential; if holiness is the same in nature and kind, in whatever being it is found; if one chief design of divine revelation is to teach us what holiness is, and it is, from the beginning to the end of the Bible, held up to view in the most clear and intelligible manner, in the best way to give us a true idea of it, as it stands distinguished from every thing else, so that he who runs may read it, (see Isa. xxxv. 8,) — if all this is true, then surely nothing can be more certainly and with greater ease determined than the question before us; as we may be sure, on the one hand, that whatsoever does not agree to all these is not true holiness, however it may seem to agree to some; and, on the other hand, that which is found to bear all these marks has the divine stamp, and may be safely fixed upon without any further researches.

SECTION II.

Holiness consists in Love.

The law of God is the standard of all moral rectitude or holiness. Holiness consists in conformity to this, and in

nothing else. Therefore, the knowledge of the precepts of the moral law decides the question before us; for whatever the holy law of God requires is holiness, and nothing else can deserve the name. Our divine Teacher has, in his great wisdom and goodness, given us a summary of the divine law, in the following words: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." (Matt. xxii. 37–40.)

Here all obedience to the law of God is reduced to one thing — *love;* love to God and our neighbor, including ourselves. This is the whole that is required; therefore, this is the whole of true holiness; it consists in this love, and in nothing else. When Christ says, "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets," he must be understood to assert that the whole of the law and the prophets, all that is required in them, is love. All depends upon this; so that if love is removed, all that is required is removed; the law and the prophets come to nothing, and fall to the ground. Take love away, and there is nothing left that is required in the whole of divine revelation. If love was not the whole that the law requires, it could not be said to be wholly suspended on this, so as utterly to fall if love is excluded; for the law would still exist, as there would be yet something commanded.

But if there could be any doubt about the meaning of these words of our Savior, St. Paul has explained them when he says, "Love is the fulfilling of the law; for all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." (Rom. xiii. 10. Gal. v. 14.) If all the law is fulfilled in love, then this is all that the law requires; for the law is not fulfilled unless the whole is given which it requires. Therefore, love is the whole of that obedience which the law requires — perfect, supreme love to God, and that love to our neighbor which is implied in it, i. e., loving him as ourselves. This love, expressed in all proper ways, which is implied in its being perfect, is the fulfilling of the law; this is true holiness. Therefore, the love of God, and keeping his commandments, is spoken of as one thing. "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments." (1 John v. 3.) This could not be if there was any obedience or holiness which is not love, or there was any command which required any thing less or more than love.

Thus far, then, we go on sure ground, and have the greatest certainty that holiness consists in love; and all the difficulty

in the question before us is in determining what is meant by love — what is the nature and kind of that love which the law requireth. This will be particularly attended to in the following section.

SECTION III.

What is that Love in which all true Holiness consists?

Though it is certain from the Holy Scriptures that all true holiness consists in love, yet all love is not holiness. If it were, then all men would be holy, and have a great degree of holiness; for we all exercise much love, even in all our volitions and conduct. But it is so far from being true that all kinds of love, and love to all objects, is holiness, that there is a sinful love often spoken of in Scripture. Such is the love of them that hate the Lord, (2 Chron. xix. 2,) the love of the world, (1 John ii. 15,) and love of our own selves, (2 Tim. iii. 2.) There is a kind of love, therefore, which is, in its nature, contrary to holiness; of this the world has been full in all ages. It is necessary, therefore, that we should carefully inquire into the nature and kind of holy love, in order to find the true and proper distinction and difference between that and the love in which there is no holiness.

Love has been usually distinguished into love of benevolence, or good will, love of complacence, or delight, love of esteem, and love of gratitude. The love of benevolence is good will to beings capable of good, or happiness, and consists in desiring and pursuing their good, or rejoicing in their possessing it. By benevolence is, I suppose, most commonly meant that good will which is exercised towards other beings, in distinction from self-love. But good will is as really implied in self-love as in the love of others; for they who love themselves only, exercise good will towards themselves.

Complacence is that affection of the mind in which we are pleased with any object. There is what may be called complacence in benevolence itself, even in all the exercises of it, being necessarily implied in it. Good will to any being supposes a taste for good and happiness, and that we have some good in view with which we are pleased. If any one wishes well to himself only, this is taking delight in some good as *his own;* and wishing well to others implies a taste and relish for the good of others, as *theirs*, and a delight in it when they are seen possessed of it.

But by the love of complacence, when distinguished from benevolence, is, I think, generally meant the pleasure and

delight we take in the person and character of an intelligent being, as beautiful and excellent. In this sense the word will be used in this discourse. And, complacence being understood in this sense, it may be observed that benevolence and complacence have not always the same object. We may exercise good will to a person whose whole character is very disagreeable and displeasing to us, so that he may, at the same time, be the object of our benevolence and of our displacence and aversion, because, though capable of happiness, his present character is disagreeable and hateful.

The love of esteem is nothing distinct from benevolence and complacence exercised towards a worthy, excellent object, — at least in our apprehension. The love of gratitude is that affection which we exercise towards another, considered as a benefactor, for his good will exercised towards ourselves or others. This includes in it both benevolence and complacence, and is nothing distinct from this, as might be easily shown were there need of it, and will, perhaps, be more particularly attended to in the sequel.

Having observed these things concerning love in general, it now remains to be said what that love is in which holiness consists. This is love to God and our neighbor, including ourselves, and is universal benevolence, or friendly affection to all intelligent beings. This universal benevolence, with all that affection or love which is included in it, and inseparable from it, is the holy love which God's law requires, and is the whole of true holiness. This love is distinguished from all other kinds of love both in its nature and object. The object is, —

1. Universal being, including God and all intelligent creatures. Benevolence, or universal goodness, has for its object all beings which exist, capable of good, or that can be, in any sense and degree, objects of good will. Any kind of good will, or any thing which has the appearance of benevolence, which is limited to particular objects, and will not extend to all towards which good will can be exercised, is not universal benevolence, but is essentially different from it, and quite of another nature. That good will which will extend only to a limited number, or a certain kind or circle of beings, by the supposition is not universal good will; it falls, as it were, infinitely short of it in this respect, and is so far from uniting its subject to universal existence, that it is circumscribed by very narrow bounds, and is consistent with ill will and opposition to general existence; yea, it is, in fact, in its own nature such, for it sets up an infinitely small part of existence, compared with the whole, and regards it above the whole, which has

the nature of unfriendly disregard and real opposition to the whole. It hence appears to be so far from true, universal benevolence, that it is of an opposite nature, as it does, from its nature, oppose it. Besides, it is certain that such limited good will has nothing of the nature of universal goodness, but it is something in its own nature which thus limits it to a small part of being, in opposition to being in general, as there can be no other reason of this limitation but the nature of the affection itself, which could not be if it was not in nature different from universal benevolence, and contrary to it.*

But holy love unites the heart to universal existence, so far as it comes into view, and is the most cordial friendship to all without exception, and wishes and seeks the good of every individual, so far as this is consistent with the greatest good of being in general, except those who are known implacable enemies to general existence; and these are necessarily opposed by this universal benevolence.

2. Another object of universal benevolence is the highest good of the whole. As soon and as far as the eyes of the benevolent person are opened to see what is the true good of intelligent beings, and highest happiness of the universe, this good becomes the object of his wishes. And as holiness itself is this true and highest good, — even holy love and benevolence, by which intelligences are united together in the most beautiful, happy manner, every one to his utmost conspiring to promote the greatest general good, and enjoying this good, — I say, as this is the highest good, it becomes the object of his delight and of his wishes; so that this is the object of his benevolence and of his complacence at the same time. And in this, also, holy love is distinguished from every other kind of love, as that has not holiness for its object in any sense or degree, but is consistent with the utmost aversion to it. And this holy love differs from all other kinds of love in its *nature* as well as object. The nature of it may be determined by its object. That affection whose object not only differs in nature and kind from the object of other love, but is opposite to it, must itself be of a different and opposite nature.

* Mr. Edwards has set this in a clear light, in his dissertation concerning the Nature of True Virtue, pp. 129, 130, 131.

And this view of the matter shows us in what sense universal existence is the *primary* object of holy benevolence. This is the first and most essential thing in it, in which lies its distinction from all love which is not holy. This is the leading, governing thing in it, as that in which its peculiar distinguishing nature consists. He who exercises true benevolence towards any particular being does it as a friend to the whole, so that his love to him is really love to being in general, as he belongs to the whole and is included in it.

But the particular nature of this love will be more fully explained hereafter.

This universal benevolence or love to being in general must have God, who is infinitely the greatest and most excellent, and the sum of all being and perfection, for its object, and is exercised towards him in loving him with all the heart, with all the soul, with all the mind, and with all the strength. This is, I think, well expressed by Mr. Edwards in the following words: "The mind being under the sovereign dominion of love to God, does above all things seek the glory of God, and make this his supreme, governing and ultimate end, consisting in the expression of God's perfections in their proper effects, and in the communications of the infinite fulness of God to the creature, in the creature's highest esteem of God, love to God and joy in God, and in the proper exercises and expressions of these. And as far as such a mind exercises benevolence to created beings, it chiefly seeks the good of the creature, consisting in its knowledge or view of God's glory and beauty, its union with God, conformity and love to him, and joy in him. And that temper or disposition of heart, that consent, union or propensity of mind to being in general, which appears chiefly in such exercises, is real holiness. And no other affection but this is of the nature of true virtue." *

But it will be proper here more particularly to show that all holy affection consists in this benevolence or goodness, and that it can consist in nothing but this, and what is implied in it. This will be evident if the two following propositions can be supported: —

1. Universal benevolence does imply love of complacence, and all holy love. He who exercises universal benevolence does esteem and take complacency in all, according to their worth and excellence; for not to do so is unkind and injurious, and therefore contrary to the nature of benevolence. And benevolent affection, from the necessity of its nature, is pleased with this same affection in others. Every one must be pleased with friendship to those to whom he himself is a friend; for not to be so would be a contradiction.

Benevolent, kind affection necessarily implies also gratitude to benefactors for kindness exercised, for this is nothing else but being properly affected with the benevolence of others, which has just been shown to be the nature of benevolence. Besides, not to exercise gratitude towards the benevolent and kind, is itself unkind, and therefore contrary to the nature of benevolence. A man must be stripped of all true benevolence,

* Nature of True Virtue, p. 133.

in order to exclude gratitude; where the former is, the latter is found to an equal degree. Thus evident is it, that all holy love is implied in universal benevolence, so that he who has this, certainly has the whole. To suppose a person truly benevolent and not to exercise holy love of esteem, complacency and gratitude, in all suitable ways, and towards all proper objects, is a most glaring contradiction, and to imagine a character which never did nor can exist.

2. On the contrary, where there is no holy love of benevolence, there can be no holy love of any kind. Since benevolence necessarily includes all holy love in its very nature, where this is not, there is not, there cannot be, any holy love.

The love of gratitude supposes benevolence, and is really an exercise of this. Gratitude is certainly an approbation of benevolence which never takes place in a mind destitute of it. And what is gratitude but an exercise of friendly affection towards the benevolent? So certain is it, that where there is no good will, there is no true gratitude. This is so evident at first thought, that it is needless to enlarge.

But I shall be more particular in producing evidence that there can be no holy love of complacence where there is no benevolence. Holy complacence is the love of holiness for holiness' sake, or the approbation of a holy character for its intrinsic beauty and excellence. That there can be no holy complacence independent of benevolence, is evident from the following considerations: —

The mind cannot have any holy complacence in universal goodness, while itself is wholly destitute of it. The mind which is wholly devoid of kind affection has no true, sensible idea of benevolence, and consequently can have no delight in it. Delight or complacence is a sensation of the mind, which cannot be exercised towards that object of which it has no true sense; but the mind which has no benevolence has no sensation of it, for such a sensation implies benevolence, and therefore can have no complacence in it. As the love of holiness is an exercise of holiness, so the love of holy benevolence implies the exercise of benevolence. Therefore he who hath no benevolence hath no complacence in it. But that affection of the mind which is not the love of *all* holiness, in whatever it may consist, is not a true, holy complacence, but something of a different nature. Therefore, there can be no holy complacence in holiness without the exercise of benevolence; consequently, where there is no benevolence there is no holy exercise of mind.

But this will be more evident, if possible, by considering the love of complacence as exercised towards God. It will appear,

on due consideration, that the person who has no universal benevolence does not heartily approve of the benevolence of God, and therefore does not delight in God's holiness or moral character, so far as it consists in benevolence. But he who is not a friend to the holy benevolence of God is certainly not a friend to holiness in general, and so has no complacency in any true holiness. Yea, he who has no benevolence in his heart is an enemy to benevolence; for the heart of man is in no such instance indifferent, neither friendly nor opposed to any thing in God's moral character; is never in such a state as neither to approve nor disapprove. Therefore such a one is an enemy to universal benevolence in God; whence it follows that he has no true love to God's moral character. For he who is displeased with any thing in the moral character of God is certainly displeased with the whole, as the holiness of God is not inconsistent with itself, but is one most simple thing.

The holiness of God, which is expressed in his law, and in the gospel, (for the same character and the same holiness is expressed in both,) consists in a great measure, at least, in such supreme regard to himself and the highest happiness and glory of his kingdom, that he holds every one who opposes him and his kingdom, or has the least disrespect or even indifference towards him and his glory, justly exposed to eternal damnation, and is disposed to inflict it on all such who cannot be delivered from it consistent with his own highest honor and the greatest good of the whole.

Now, it is in the nature of things impossible, that he who has no regard to God and his glory, and no universal good will, should in the least approve of such a character. Yea, he must be at enmity with it, as there is no medium. He who is not for it is against it.*

This will appear still more glaring, by observing what will be more particularly considered hereafter, that the holy love of God, which is most celebrated in the divine oracles as worthy of our love and imitation, is the love of benevolence, which God exercises and manifests towards fallen man, who has become his enemy. This is certainly a love, not of complacence, but of benevolence, as all love to enemies must be. Now he who has not that benevolence which disposes him to love his enemies, will not be pleased with this love of God, but displeased. He who has no love to his enemies, but cherishes the contrary affection, will not be pleased with that

* The mind thus estranged from universal good will is "the carnal mind, which is enmity against God." (Rom. viii. 7.)

good will which is equally extended to his enemies and to himself, but such love must be the object of his aversion.

Thus evident is it that they who have no benevolence do not approve of God's holiness or moral character revealed in his word; since universal benevolence must be the object, not of their delight, but of their aversion; and, consequently, that the holy love of complacence cannot exist independent of benevolence, which was the point to be proved.*

But if any reader should not see the conclusiveness of these arguments, he is desired to reflect on his own sense of this matter, whether he does not always so include benevolence in his idea of a good character, that, to exclude it, will utterly spoil the whole. I doubt not this is the common sense of all men; and nothing is looked upon as more certain evidence that a man has no holiness, than that conduct which discovers he has no kind affection, but is unmerciful and cruel.

* Mr. Hart says, men are drawn to God "by his giving them to feel in themselves his attracting love and virtue, and paternal benevolence and propensity of heart towards them, by a realizing belief of which, their hearts are put in motion towards him; that all true virtue and virtuous love begins thus." That this being "perceived, realized, and felt, as extended to them, is the true cause, ground, and source of the first existence of such a thing in them as a truly virtuous propensity of heart to him." — *Remarks on President Edwards*, pp. 23, 24.

Upon this it may be observed that the love of God, which Mr. Hart here speaks of, is the love of benevolence, God's "paternal benevolence." It is the love of benevolence, not only as it is love to enemies, but as it is love and grace, in and through Jesus Christ, in which God is represented, in the most clear and striking light, as having such a regard to himself and the general good (which is nothing but universal benevolence) that he will not show any favor to sinners, unless his glory and the general good be effectually secured by Christ the Mediator. And he who sees not God's grace and love to men in this light, knows not what is the grace of God in Jesus Christ. Therefore, the sense of this love of God, in which their hearts are drawn to him, is itself of the nature of benevolence, and the exercise of it; for, as has been shown, it is impossible that he who has no holy benevolence should heartily approve of such benevolence, and take pleasure in it. Therefore, according to Mr. Hart, the first exercise of holiness in men cannot be an exercise of love in which there is no benevolence, but this must be the very essence of the first holy act, in which the soul is attracted to God, as the fountain and sum of benevolence, or universal goodness.

If Mr. Hart will show how a sinner, while wholly destitute of benevolence, and wholly inclined to contrary exercises, can feel the attracting influence of God's benevolence, and take complacence in his universal goodness, and, under this attracting influence, return to God, and become his true friend, without any good will to God or any other being, we will then grant that universal benevolence is not necessarily implied in the first, nor in any subsequent motion of the sinner's heart towards God and his neighbor.

If it should be said, that when sinners have a realizing belief of God's "paternal benevolence and propensity of heart towards them," they do not consider it as universal benevolence, but only as love to themselves in particular, and that this attracts their hearts to God, while yet they have no approbation of general benevolence, or the least apprehension of it, — upon this I would observe, that this may be Mr. Hart's meaning, and he may express himself thus, through

SECTION IV.

Self-love is no Part of that Love in which Holiness consists, but of a Nature quite different and opposite.

Self-love has been represented by many, not only as a branch of holiness, but that in which it radically consists, making it the spring of all our actions. Some have thought it not only no part of holiness, but opposed to it. Others have taken a medium between these two, and represented self-love to be in its nature innocent and good, but not holy love, unless love to God and our neighbor be joined with it, to regulate and govern it. In order to determine which of these opinions is right, we must understand what is intended by self-love. By this, very different things are meant by different, and often by the same persons. There are three things especially, often called by that name, and their not being distinguished has occasioned great confusion and error in treating this subject.

1. A general appetite to good, and aversion to evil, considered merely as such, or a perception of pain or pleasure, is called self-love. This is essential to all moral agents, being implied in every act of will. If nothing was good or evil to us, we could have no choice or power of will more than a tree or rock; for by the supposition we should be perfectly indifferent to every thing; we could neither love nor hate, choose nor refuse. This general appetite is, therefore, common to all moral agents, holy and sinful, and is essential to every act, both of sin and holiness. It is properly a natural capacity, as much so as the faculty of understanding, or power of will; and is the very same thing, indeed, with the latter, or at least implied in it. It is, therefore, in itself, neither sinful nor holy,

inattention to the true notion of general benevolence, as many doubtless have done. But if the matter is viewed in this light, there is nothing of the nature of holiness in the attraction of their hearts to God, merely because they think he loves them. As they may exercise this love without any benevolence, so they may, and must do it, without the least degree of holiness. It has been shown that this is not a true sight and belief of the love of God; and it will appear, I hope, in the sequel, that this has nothing of the nature of holiness; but is consistent with the reigning power of every lust. I shall here only take notice of the most express decision of our Savior himself: "If ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? For sinners love those that love them." (Luke vi. 32.) Men may be easily converted upon this plan, without having new hearts given them, or any change of heart for the better. They want this light only, i. e., a belief that God loves them, (which is not light, indeed, but delusion,) and they will love him in this view and on this ground only, without any disposition to love their enemies, and consistent with their continuing to hate the holiness of God.

but a foundation or capacity for either. Should this cease in angels and devils, they would no longer be holy or sinful.

2. By self-love, is sometimes meant *selfishness*, or those exercises in which a person loves himself only, which wholly confine him to his own personal interest; he taking no pleasure in any thing else, but placing all his good and happiness here. This is most properly called self-love, as it is a man's love of his own self, *as self*, and of nothing else; and therefore is opposed to the love of others, or universal benevolence. This is wholly an interested, selfish affection, by which a person sets up himself as supreme, and the only object of regard, and nothing is good or lovely in his view, unless it coincide with his selfishness, and be suited to promote his own private interest — all other beings are by him subordinated to himself, and loved for his own sake only, and so far as they oppose or do not serve this contracted, partial interest in which he places all his good and happiness, are either hated or totally disregarded. In a word, the disposition and language of his heart is, "There is nothing in the whole universe of any worth to me but my own self; if I may be happy, it is enough." There is no need of any labored proof to show that such exercises of heart are, in their nature, opposition to universal good will; this appears at first view. Therefore, if the latter has any thing of the nature of holiness, the former must stand directly opposed to it.

3. By self-love, may be understood the love a person has for himself as part of the whole, which is implied in universal benevolence. He who loves the whole, loves every part of the whole; therefore must love himself, and seek his own happiness, as he is included in general being. It is a contradiction to suppose that a person has universal good will, and yet has no regard to himself. This love of ourselves is therefore necessarily implied in that universal benevolence which is opposed to the selfishness described above. That is altogether selfish, consisting in a man's loving himself, as self, or merely because he is himself, but this love of himself of which I am now speaking is not love of self, as self, but as implied in the general object of love; and therefore is no other than love, love to being in general, or universal benevolence. It is the same kind of affection with which he loves his neighbor; in loving his neighbor, he loves himself also, because he cannot love his neighbor as part of the whole, and not love himself also as such; his own happiness as an individual being worth as much in itself, and to the whole, as that of his neighbor, and as much included in the general good, since it equally conduces to the happiness of the whole.

And it may be further observed, that this love, in which a man regards himself as part of the whole, and his interest and happiness for the same reason he regards that of his neighbor, may be exercised with greater strength and more sensibly with respect to his own interest and welfare than towards that of his neighbor, who is as worthy of regard as himself, and yet there be nothing selfish in his affection, but it may be wholly of the nature of general benevolence; and that for two reasons: —

1. He has a more clear, full, and constant view of himself and his interest than he can have of his neighbor's; therefore he must be more affected with the former, and it will be more the object of his concern than the latter. As man is not omniscient, and his mind cannot comprehend universal being, but is limited in his views and exercises, he must be most affected with those objects which are most in his view. This is right, and his duty; and not to be thus affected is inconsistent with general benevolence.

2. Every person has a more particular and immediate care of himself committed to him by God than of his neighbor. As he is under greater advantages to know his own state and circumstances, wants and enjoyments, and promote his own interest in general, than another can be, so this concern is more especially committed to him, which is a further reason why he should pay a greater regard to it than to that of his neighbor, though in itself as great and important as his own. This is not selfishness, but the genuine exercise of disinterested benevolence.

Thus, a man who has a benevolent regard for a whole community or kingdom, and is equally a friend to every part and each person of that community, and equally exerts himself for the welfare of each, so far as they come under his notice, when he is fixed in a particular town, and thereby obtains a clearer knowledge of their circumstances, both good and evil, and of the best means to promote their greatest happiness, he will necessarily turn his attention to them more constantly and in a greater degree, and be more sensibly affected with their miseries and enjoyments than with those of the neighboring towns. And of the inhabitants of this town, they whose circumstances and interest are most in his view, and who by their particular situation and connection are most under his care, will have the first and greatest share of his attention and benevolent regards. This is no evidence that he is selfish; it is the natural, genuine exercise of general benevolence.

This view may serve to show us one reason why, in many cases, it is so difficult to distinguish that self-love which

consists in selfishness, from the benevolence which is its contrary, and why these are often confounded and taken for the same thing. That self-love which consists in selfishness has self for its first and supreme object, and is extended to others only as they are viewed as more or less favorable to the interest of self, as such.

Thus selfishness may extend to a whole community, and each individual member of it, because the selfish man considers their welfare as connected with his own. And as his welfare is commonly in a higher degree and more sensibly connected with the welfare of those who are nearest to him, especially those who love him, he will have a greater regard still for them and their welfare, purely from selfishness or for his own sake. And since his near relations, his own family and children, are in a sense a part of himself, and his interest and happiness are in a peculiar manner dependent on theirs, his selfish regards will be more particularly extended to them. In this respect there is in selfishness a resemblance to what is found in benevolence, which, though it consists in disinterested good will to the whole, is, as observed above, nevertheless exercised by the benevolent person to individuals, and more strongly to those who are more nearly connected with him, and more particularly to himself.

There is, however, a great difference and opposition in these two kinds of affection, which appears from what has been already said. This selfish affection, though extended to the whole community with which the selfish man is connected, is at bottom nothing but love to himself. This is the foundation and centre of his love. He in reality loves nothing but himself, and regards others wholly for his own sake. Therefore, when he considers their welfare as inconsistent with his own, or any way opposing or impeding his interest, his heart will turn against them and hate them, whatever be their connection or relation. On the other hand, the regard to a man's own interest, which is included in general good will, is not love of himself, as such. There is nothing contracted and selfish in this affection, which is founded on his good will to the whole.

This brings into view another thing, in which these two sorts of love of self differ and oppose each other. He whose regard to himself and his own interest does not arise from selfishness, but general benevolence, is ready to give up his own personal good for the sake of the whole; he desires no good for himself unless consistent with the common good. Whatever supposed good of his own or of another interferes with the greatest general good, is no good to him, but the object of his aversion in this view of it; so that all his own

particular interest is subordinate to that of the whole. This is necessary when regard to ourselves is but a branch of general good will. Thus the interest of the benevolent man is the common interest, and he has no other. In a word, he subjects and devotes himself and all things to the glory of God, and the happiness and glory of his church and kingdom, — which is the greatest universal good, and includes the highest good of the creature, — he having no other interest but this.

But that self-love which consists in selfishness is, in this respect, most opposite to this. So far as the heart is governed by this it does not, it cannot, give up its own private good for the sake of the greatest public good, since, by the supposition, he knows no good but the former, and every thing is by him subordinated to that. But enough has been said to show the difference and opposition there is between selfishness and that regard and concern a benevolent person has for his own interest, as a part of the whole, which is necessarily implied in general benevolence.

It has been said, though *inordinate* self-love is sinful, it is not so in itself, but when joined with love to God and our neighbor, and subordinate to the general good, it is a virtuous, holy affection; and to confirm this, the divine command has been alleged — "Thou shalt love thy neighbor *as thyself*." "Here," it is said, "we are commanded to love ourselves as much as our neighbor. Self-love is, therefore, not a sin, but a duty, so long as it does not exceed due bounds."

Upon this the following things may be observed: —

1. It is utterly unaccountable, and carries in it a direct contradiction, that the same affection, when exercised in a certain limited degree, should be holiness, but when exercised in a higher and stronger degree should not only have less holiness, but change its nature and become sin. This none will assert after due attention, yet this is asserted in the proposition under consideration. However self-love may be restrained, it is still self-love, and of the same nature with that which is under no restraint, and therefore as opposite to holiness, though not to so great a degree, and the bad effects of it may not be so great or so manifest. A devouring beast of prey, when confined in a cage, may not be so mischievous, or appear so dreadful, as when let loose and destroying all before him; but his nature is not changed by his confinement; he is still in his nature not a harmless creature, but a beast of prey.

2. This self-love cannot be subordinate to the good of the whole; it is contrary to the very nature of it, and implies a contradiction. It seeks to advance self only, and subordinates

every thing to this, and therefore will not consent that self should be subordinated to any thing else, or have any rival. Whenever it consents to this it is no longer self-love, but generous, disinterested affection — as contrary to selfishness as mercy is to injustice and cruelty. Such a consent and change is, however, impossible, being a contradiction. This affection must be rooted out, or counteracted, and a directly opposite affection must take place in order to a person's subordinating his own personal interest to any other interest whatsoever.

Therefore, if they who speak of self-love so regulated as to be subordinate to a proper regard to others, and to the general good, mean any thing which is consistent and agreeable to the truth, they must intend that regard to ourselves which is not self-love, but real benevolence to the whole, and respects ourselves as part of the whole only. This regard to ourselves, as has been shown, is always, of necessity, subordinate to the good of the whole.

3. Self-love is so far from being enjoined or approved in the command, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," that it is utterly forbidden. Self-love is wholly a partial affection, giving all to ourselves and nothing to our neighbor, and is, therefore, opposed to love to him, especially to loving him as ourselves.

Nothing but universal benevolence can be obedience to this command; and so far as this takes place it is obeyed, and self-love is opposed and mortified. This benevolence, as has been shown, implies a proper regard to ourselves, and an equal regard to our neighbor — having all that impartiality, and love to our neighbor and ourselves, which this law requires. And, by the way, this is a clear evidence that universal benevolence, with the affection implied in it, is that in which all holiness consists, since no other kind of love is obedience to this command; but he who has this does of necessity love his neighbor as himself.

On the whole, it appears that three different kinds of affection have been called self-love. The first is neither sin nor holiness, but is equally implied in both. The two last are directly opposed to each other, the latter being general, disinterested benevolence, extended to ourselves as included in the whole, and is the same holy love which has God and our neighbor for its object. The other is contracted selfishness, by which self only is regarded, and exalted above God and our neighbor and in opposition to the general good, and is, in every degree of it, sinful. This selfishness is properly called *self-love*, and in this sense the word will be used in the following inquiry: —

That universal benevolence is the whole of holiness, and, on the other hand, all sin consists in self-love, will more fully appear by the following consideration of each in its exercises and fruits.

Universal good will comprehends all the love to God, our neighbor, and ourselves, required in the law of God, and therefore must be the whole of holy obedience. Every pious sentiment and affection is comprised in this, and all piety in words and practice is but an expression of this love. Where this love is not, all outward expressions of piety in words and actions are emptiness and hypocrisy. Let any serious person think what are the particular branches of true piety; let him view each one by itself; and, when he has discovered the nature and essence of it, he will find that disinterested friendly affection is its distinguishing characteristic. For instance, let fear and reverence of the divine Majesty be considered in this view. What but love and friendly affection distinguishes this from the fear and dread of devils? All the holiness in pious fear, by which it is distinguished from the fear of the wicked, consists in love. Leave all disinterested friendly affection to the divine Being out of fear, and all holiness is excluded.

Again: if we consider what is contained in true gratitude to God, we shall find disinterested kind affection the only thing wherein it differs from the affection of the most wicked creature. Where there is no good will there is nothing in what is called gratitude better than that which the legion of devils exercised when they were so far gratified by Christ as to be suffered to destroy the herd of swine. But so far as good will is exercised, the goodness of God to us and others will excite holy gratitude, which is nothing else but good will to God and our neighbor, in which we ourselves are included, and correspondent affection excited and acted out in the view of the good will and kindness of God.

And universal good will implies the whole of that affection and duty we owe to our neighbor. It all consists in the exercise and expression of this, and those affections that are implied in it. The exercise and practice of righteousness or justice towards our neighbor implies a benevolent regard to him and his interest. Where this is not there is no exercise and practice of justice in the heart, whatever is the external conduct; for justice consists in doing to our neighbor as we would he should do to us, or, in other words, loving our neighbor as ourselves. And where this benevolent regard to our neighbor is there is justice, for this love worketh no ill to our neighbor. And as righteousness, truth, and faithfulness are implied in universal benevolence, so are temperance and chas-

tity, or sobriety, in the proper restraint and government of our own appetites and passions; for it is easy to see that the undue indulgence of these is contrary to benevolence, as tending to hurt others, or ourselves, or both, and so is opposite to the general good and the divine command, in which all the crime of such indulgence consists. In short, there is not any one virtue, or branch of godliness, humanity, or sobriety, not any duty we owe to God, our neighbor, or ourselves, that is not comprehended in universal benevolence, and is not necessarily exercised and practised so far as this affection takes place in the heart. And where there is no defect in the latter, the former are found in their fulness and perfection; for the whole is nothing but benevolence acted out in its proper nature and perfection, or, love to God and our neighbor made perfect in all its genuine exercises and expressions.

On the contrary, all sin consists in self-love and what is implied in this.

Self-love is, in its whole nature and in every degree of it, enmity against God. It is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be, and is the only affection that can oppose it. It cannot be reconciled to any of God's conduct, rightly understood, but is, in its very nature, rebellion against it; which is all an expression of that love which is most contrary to self-love. This is, therefore, the fruitful source of every exercise and act of impiety and rebellion against God, and contempt of him, that ever was or can be.

Self-love, exercised and indulged, blinds the heart to every true moral excellence and beauty: this does not suit the taste of the selfish heart, but gives it disgust. Self-love is the foundation and reason of all that blindness to spiritual things — to God, his glorious character, works, and kingdom — which the Scripture represents wicked men to have, and is, therefore, the source of all the errors which men imbibe, as well as all the open idolatry in the heathen world, and false religion under the light of the gospel. All this is agreeable to that self-love which opposes God's true character; and under the influence of this men go off from the truth, and believe, love, and practise a lie, — it being itself the greatest practical lie in nature, as it sets up that which is comparatively nothing above universal existence. Self-love is the source of all the profaneness and impiety in the world, and of all pride and ambition among men, which is nothing but selfishness acted out in this particular way. This is at the bottom of all the worldliness and sensuality that men run into, as it blinds their eyes to all true good, contracts their hearts, and sinks them down, so that they look upon worldly enjoyments to be the greatest good,

and that in which their true interest lies. This is the spring of all the hatred and ill will, strife and contention among men; for this leads men to hate and oppose all those whom they view in the way of their own selfish interest. This is the source of all falsehood, injustice, and oppression under the sun, in which men are, through their selfishness, seeking, by undue methods, to invade the right and property of others. Self-love produces all the violent passions, envy, wrath, clamor, and evil speaking, of which men are guilty. Take away selfishness, and all these would cease immediately. And if there be any other sin, any thing which is contrary to the divine law, it is briefly comprehended in this fruitful source of all iniquity, *self-love*.

And hence we may see that holy love is wholly a disinterested affection, and in what sense it is so. Self-love is wholly an interested affection, as self is the only object of it. Holy love has no regard to self, as self, but is a regard to the greatest general good and interest, the glory of God in the highest glory of his kingdom, and the greatest good of the creation. So far as a man exercises holy love, he has no other interest but this, as all is devoted to this, and given up for the sake of it. And, in this sense, all his love is disinterested, as it seeks not any self-interest, but the contrary. He who exercises this disinterested love has pleasure indeed, and is pursuing an interest and happiness, though it is not a selfish interest, but that in the pursuit of which he renounces what self-love seeks.

A judge is said to be interested in a cause he is to decide so far as his own personal interest is concerned in it, and his self-love will influence him to take one side rather than the other, which renders him unfit to judge the cause. But if his own personal interest is not concerned in the case, and there be nothing to bias him to one side rather than the other, he is said to be disinterested. And though he may be bribed, or some way interested in the matter, yet if he is not at all influenced by this, and decides the cause contrary to the dictates of self-love, he is said to act disinterestedly. In such a sense as this, all holy affection is disinterested.

Such a judge, when he renounces all selfish considerations, and espouses the cause of the widow and fatherless, and delivers them from the hand of oppressors, has an interest which he seeks, but not an interest which selfishness prompts him to pursue; and the more he interests himself in the cause of the poor, helpless widow, and the greater pleasure he takes in helping her, the more disinterested are his exertions and conduct, and the more is self-love counteracted and mortified.

So he, who, in the exercise of holy love, pursues the glory

of God and the highest interest and happiness of his kingdom, which includes the greatest good of his fellow-creatures, pursues the best, the most important interest, and has the most noble, refined pleasure in the exercise of this affection; yet in all this he is wholly disinterested, as he opposes selfishness and all regard to self, which is not implied in being thus devoted to the greatest general good, and forsakes the whole interest which self-love seeks, for the kingdom of God's sake.

SECTION V.

The foregoing Account of Sin and Holiness shown to be agreeable to Reason.

I. It is most reasonable that the common and greatest good of the whole should be sought by every particular member of it; that every one should be so devoted to the good of the whole as to give up the less good of individuals, and consequently his own personal interest, whenever inconsistent herewith. Thus, it is highly reasonable that a particular member of a community should cheerfully give up all his personal interest, his whole estate, and even his life, when this is evidently necessary to save the whole nation from ruin. If a city is on fire, and in order to stop its progress and save the city it is necessary that the house of a particular person should be totally demolished, he should with pleasure give up his house to be destroyed, however magnificent and costly, and though it contains all he has in the world. If in this case a man should hesitate a moment, and be inclined to save his own house to the utter destruction of the whole city, every one would condemn him as acting a most unreasonable, sordid part. But if he is such a friend to the city, and interests himself so much in its welfare as to take more pleasure in saving it, even at the expense of all he has in the world, than a selfish man can have in whatever he possesses, he will be applauded as one of an excellent spirit. And every one must grant he ought to be imitated by all. And it is reasonable that every one of the society should be regarded by the rest, according to his importance and worth, his disposition and ability to promote the greatest good of the whole community.

But this is universal, disinterested benevolence. Nothing but this will form men to such exercises and conduct. But where this benevolence reigns in every heart, each one will be thus a friend to all. He who has this benevolence, will, by it, be united to the grand community of the universe, including

all existence, and be devoted to the good of the whole. And as this is comprised in the glory of God, and the perfection and happiness of his kingdom, this will be the object of his affection, and he will subordinate all to this, and in so doing will act a most reasonable part.

On the other hand, nothing can be more unreasonable than that every individual should be altogether selfish, and seek his own personal interest only, not caring what becomes of the community, or any belonging to it, further than his selfishness prompts him to it, being ready at any time to sacrifice the public, and the greatest good of every individual to his own private advantage, however important and worthy he is, and whatever obligation he is under to him.

This carries in it every thing mean, mischievous, and perverse. But this is self-love. This is the nature and tendency of every degree of it, though it may be many ways under restraints, and often put on the appearance of benevolence and friendship.

II. This universal benevolence alone can produce the strong, happy union of intelligences which reason teaches must be the attendant of holiness. It fixes each in his proper place, and effects the highest and most beautiful harmony conceivable.

III. Reason teaches that universal benevolence is the highest good of intelligences. This makes every one a wise, hearty friend to all the rest, and devotes him to the public good; by which the highest common good has the greatest possible security, and is advanced to the utmost. Should a king and his subjects be thus united in the most perfect friendship to each other, and entirely devoted to the highest general good, each one knowing wherein it consists, and the community having wisdom to contrive and power to execute the best means to effect it, there would be no evil in this kingdom but what is necessary to promote the general good, which would be advanced to the highest degree; and it must be, in this respect, the most happy community imaginable.

And this raises the happiness of each individual to the highest pitch his capacity will admit. For his universal benevolence will necessarily put him in possession of the good of the whole, and of every particular, so far as he perceives it, and in proportion to the degree of his benevolence. By his disinterested good will this is become his good, or he enjoys it as much as if it were his own personal good, whereby he has immensely more happiness than in any other possible way. And, in proportion to his good will to the whole, he takes pleasure in others who are friends to the same; and

must be filled with a peculiar satisfaction and delight while he sees all around him not only delighting in himself, as a friend to the whole, but devoted to the general good.

This may be applied to the grand community — the kingdom of God — which comprehends God, the supreme King, and all who are voluntarily united in subjection to him. The reason of man cannot invent any way to secure and promote the happiness of this community, unless universal benevolence be introduced. And no other kind of virtue is necessary to the highest conceivable good of the whole and every individual.*

But self-love, when it has its genuine, unrestrained influence, destroys all public good. This is the mother of all the lusts which bring evil into the universe. It prevents individuals enjoying the good of others, and indeed blinds them to all true happiness. It contracts the mind and degrades it below the proper pursuits of a rational creature, and entails misery on its unhappy subject.

IV. The natural world, we know, was created for the moral, and it is generally granted that the former is an emblem of the latter. We may hence expect to find that in the former, which bears a conspicuous analogy to holiness, the perfection and glory of the intellectual system. And this must be the general law of attraction, the common bond of union in our material system, by which all bodies are mutually attracted, and tend to one centre ; every part, while it attracts, being also attracted by the whole, is fixed in its station and extends its influence to all; so that each particle has, in a sense, a regard to the whole, and contributes to the general good. This is the source of the order and beauty so obvious in our world. The sun, the centre of all, spreads his kind influence over the whole; and each inferior body, at the same time it pays a due regard to all other bodies, pays him a supreme regard. This is one most simple affection, universal attraction — a most clear, striking resemblance of universal benevolence in the moral world, in which all its union and glory consist.

Further, the repulsive quality found in some bodies, by which they resist others, and which, should it universally obtain without control, would issue in the destruction of the material world, is an apt representation of self-love.

Thus reason, nature, and, I may add, general experience, join to point out universal benevolence as the sum of all holiness. Hence almost all writers on morality have made virtue

* This might be more particularly illustrated, but is left to the pleasing contemplation of the benevolent friends of Christ and his kingdom.

to consist chiefly, if not altogether, in what they call universal benevolence; though many of them have left God and his kingdom, the great object of true benevolence, out of their system; nor have they distinguished properly between benevolence and self-love.

SECTION VI.

Holiness, as taught in divine Revelation, consists in universal Benevolence.

The Holy Scripture is the best and only sure guide in determining the question before us, which has therefore been kept in view in what has been already said; but we shall now consult it more particularly.

I. The revealed law of God teaches what true holiness is. This is the only standard of all moral excellence and perfection. It is not only the standard of all holiness in the creature, but is a transcript of God's moral perfection. Nothing more is necessary, then, in order to know what holiness is, in God and the creature, but to understand this law.

Our Savior has taught us, as has been before observed, that all the law requires is love; consequently holiness must consist wholly in love. We have considered what kind of love this must be, and arguments have been offered to prove it consists in universal, disinterested benevolence; at the same time, what is meant by this has been explained. Our present inquiry is, whether this is the love required in the divine law. The answer is not difficult to him who will attend.

The law does not require self-love, but love to God and our neighbor; not from selfish motives, which is nothing but self-love extended to them, merely because of our connection with them, or the benefit we have received or hope to receive from them, or because they love us. Our Savior tells us this is not holiness, but consistent with being wholly sinful. "For if ye love them which love you, what reward have you? Do not even the publicans the same?" (Matt. v. 46.)

Let any one consult his own sense, whether he accepts that as true respect and love from any one which appears to be wholly selfish, being nothing but a regard to the benefit to himself which he hopes to receive from him. He will at once feel that this has nothing of the nature of true love, but is a mean, sordid affection, which he cannot but despise. And this is the sense of all mankind in their own case, however they may put off their Maker with such selfish affection, and

think he will accept it at their hands as true love and holiness. Thus the degenerate priests in Israel offered that to God which would affront their governor had they offered it to him, nor would they accept it from their neighbor. (Mal. i. 8.)

The love to our neighbor, which God's law requires, is certainly universal, disinterested good will, since it is a love which will dispose us to do good unto all men, and must extend to our greatest enemies; for no love but this will do so. Therefore, when Christ himself gave an instance of this love, he produced one in which there is nothing but the most disinterested goodness — benevolence towards an enemy in distress. (Luke x. 25–37.) This we are sure he would not have done, if this were not the very love required in the command. And he expressly declares that the command does not mean a love to our neighbor, as distinguished from our enemy, as it was then understood by the Jews, but love to enemies, which wishes them well and will lead us to do them good, however injuriously they treat us. (Matt. v. 43, 44.)

And is it not very unreasonable to suppose that the second command, which our Lord says is like unto the first, requires something of a different kind, though it is called by the same name — *love?* There can be no difference but what arises from the very different objects of this same love.

St. John teaches us that love to God and to our brother or neighbor is inseparable; that he who loves one of these, certainly and necessarily loves the other; which could not be, if love to God was different in kind from love to our neighbor. "If any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar. Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" (1 John iii. 17; iv. 20.) It is to be observed, that the love to our brother here spoken of is the love of good will, expressed in showing kindness to him; and, indeed, the apostle speaks of no other kind of love in this epistle, as every instance of love which he mentions is love of benevolence. Now, if love to God is not disinterested good will, how can this imply good will to our brother, or lead to it, so as to form an infallible connection?

It has been said, that he who loves God is hence led to love his neighbor, in obedience to God's command and from his example, who is good to all; and not because love to God and kind affection to our neighbor is the same kind of love. To this it may be answered, —

1. That love to God, which is not disinterested good will, nor implies it, is no principle of obedience to the divine command, and can have no tendency to it. No love will dispose

men to obey God but the love of "good will," (Eph. vi. 7,) or the love by which they are true friends of God. He who does not obey God from this motive, does not obey him at all. He is influenced only by fear, which none will say is true obedience. Therefore, they who assert we are led to love our neighbor purely because God commands it, and from love to him, if they attend to their own ideas, will find they suppose this to be love of good will, which is the very thing they are attempting to oppose, and so contradict themselves in the supposition they make, and really grant all we assert.

2. If love to God which implies no good will to him could induce to obedience in any instance, it would not dispose him to obey this command, and exercise good will to his neighbor, and such command will not in the least influence him to it. If his inducement to love his neighbor is wholly from selfish principles, which is always the case where there is no disinterested good will, it is, by the supposition, not love of his neighbor, but of himself only, and is so far from obedience to the divine command that it is rebellion against it.

3. God's universal, disinterested good will cannot be a motive to love our neighbor with the same good will, any further than we are pleased with it; for we are never disposed to imitate what we dislike. But to be pleased with this goodness of God, supposes our hearts to be in the exercise of the same; for benevolence is implied in taking pleasure in benevolence, as has been shown. This, therefore, supposes that good will is implied in that love to God which leads us to the love of good will to our neighbor; so supposes the very thing it is adduced to oppose.

Thus impossible is it to account for that inseparable connection of love to God with good will to our neighbor, which the Scripture asserts, unless this love, in these two branches of it, is the same in kind. But if love to God is, in its nature, universal, disinterested good will, the Scripture representation appears consistent and intelligible.

Thus it appears that the love required in the law of God is universal, disinterested goodness in all its branches, attendants, and fruits; therefore, this is holiness. But it must be further observed, —

God, in giving such a law, requiring such love, has expressed his universal, disinterested goodness, and showed that his moral character consists in love. We have good authority, therefore, even from the divine law, to say that *God is love.* His love is as really expressed in the law as in the gospel. In the latter, this disinterested love and goodness which appears in the law is expressed and acted out in a more full and

glorious manner and degree, and set in a more affecting and striking light. In this sense, the law is good; it is love and goodness, as really as the gospel. And as the divine holiness is expressed in the law, in requiring love, so the creature, by exercising this same love, is a partaker of God's holiness, or of the divine nature, as the Scripture represents the matter; he is transformed into the image of God; or, as St. John expresses it, "God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him."* (1 John iv. 16.)

Objection. The law is not all love and goodness. It requires love, indeed, but it is guarded with the most awful sanction, and curses him who does not obey it perfectly. This is not an expression of love, but strict and awful justice. What love can there be in cursing a sinner and punishing him forever? Love is exercised in saving sinners, but not in damning them.

Answer. He who is infinitely good, is in the same degree an enemy to all opposition to the highest good. This will be the greatest, the only crime in his view; and from this love, he will be disposed to maintain his law, which requires love, in the punishment of all such who turn enemies to the greatest good of being, according to their desert. This is the only way in which this love can properly express itself in the divine law. Had God commanded love, and not threatened the contrary with the most dreadful punishment, he would not have expressed his love and goodness, as he has done by this threatening. In this view, divine justice is nothing but the most perfect love and goodness, exercised in a proper way against the enemies of this goodness, and manifested in hating and punishing such. And the sufferings inflicted on the Son of God, when he stood in the place of sinners, and the eternal punishment of the wicked in hell, are the necessary effect and proper expression of divine love, even that same love which is expressed in the precepts of God's law, or by any other medium. This is nothing but universal benevolence, which seeks the greatest good of the whole, properly expressed in this way.

Divine love comprehends wisdom, justice, truth, and faithfulness, and every moral perfection and excellence whatsoever.†

* It is observable, that as the apostle says here, "He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him," he also says, "He that keepeth his commandments, dwelleth in him, and he in him." (1 John iii. 24.) Whence it appears that dwelling in love and keeping God's commandments is the same thing; consequently, love comprises all the obedience required, or, as St. Paul says, "Love is the fulfilling of the law."

† Wisdom consists in proposing the wisest and best end, and pursuing it by the most proper means. This is comprised in universal benevolence, which fixes on the greatest good of the whole, and seeks it as the supreme, ultimate

What is called by these different names is but one most simple thing, even *divine love;* for God, in his whole moral character, is love. Take away love and goodness, and there will be neither wisdom, truth, faithfulness, nor justice, for they have no existence but in the exercise of love; and love implies all these, and necessarily acts out so as to form a character properly denoted by these names, as it appears to creatures in different relations, and respects different objects.

The law of God, then, leads us to consider holiness as consisting in universal disinterested good will, considered in all its genuine exercises and fruits, and acted out in all its branches towards God and our neighbor. This holiness is exercised towards God in such a regard and kind affection for him as to be wholly devoted to his honor and interest, and the honor and glory of his kingdom, and seek it as the highest and ultimate end. This good will, exercised towards God, his kingdom and interest, with all those affections it comprises, is to love God with all the heart. This same holiness, or love, is exercised towards our neighbor in wishing and pursuing the greatest good of all, and of ourselves as included in the whole, and in all that disinterested affection which is necessarily implied in this.

And let it be observed here that this love to our neighbor, as it regards the greatest good of the whole as its chief object, and respects the good of individuals as included in this,—and as the greatest good of mankind consists in being the voluntary subjects and servants of Christ, in belonging to his kingdom, and promoting the highest interest of that,—this love, I say, is not really a distinct thing from seeking the glory and kingdom of God, as these perfectly coincide. In seeking the glory of God, and interest of his kingdom, we necessarily seek the greatest good of mankind; and, so far as we are devoted

end. He who has not universal benevolence does not propose and pursue the wisest and best end, but is wholly blind to it: thus universal, disinterested goodness appears to be that in which all true wisdom consists. This, therefore, must be the holiness which is called wisdom in Scripture; and its opposite, selfishness, is the foolishness which is there opposed to wisdom.

It may be also observed here that *righteous* and *holy* often mean the same thing in Scripture; and righteousness frequently intends holiness, and is often used to express the whole of God's moral character, though it is many times used in a more limited sense, and intends holiness, as exercised with regard to some particular object; but it never signifies any thing which is not holiness and does not comprise love; and the whole is comprehended in universal, disinterested benevolence. He who has this is *righteous;* his heart is right towards all beings, and disposed to give every one his due. This is righteousness in the most proper and comprehensive sense of the word, and without this love there is no righteousness. Hence righteousness seems to be put sometimes for goodness and mercy. (Ps. xxxvi. 10; lxxxix. 16; ciii. 17; cxliii. 11, 12; cxlv. 7.) So holiness evidently means the divine goodness. (Ps. xxx. 4; xcvii. 12.)

to their best interest, we act as friends to God, and seek his honor and the interest of his kingdom. The whole, therefore, is summed up in *seeking first the kingdom of God*, or making this our supreme and ultimate end, so as to be willing to do or suffer any thing that shall be necessary or proper to promote this. In this the love of God and our neighbor centre in one point, so that they cannot be divided; and this affection, in which all holiness consists, really has but one object, viz., *the kingdom of God.* Our divine Teacher sets the matter in this light, and speaks as no man would have spoke, when he directs men to seek the kingdom of God as the only object of their pursuit, for the sake of which he commands them to forsake every other interest. (Matt. vi. 33. Luke xii. 31; xviii. 29.*)

That love to God and our neighbor which seeks the greatest good of the whole, the greatest display of the divine perfections, and the highest happiness of the creation, will fix and centre in this as the grand object, for this comprises all the good in the universe — all things being made, and every thing ordered and done by God for the sake of this, and in order to bring it to the highest perfection and glory, and that it may comprise the greatest possible good. Nothing is of any worth in God's view any further than it may serve to promote the glory and happiness of this kingdom; and all the holiness of creatures consists in that love which has this for its great object, and desires and pursues this as the great and only interest, to which every thing else is subordinated.

* In Matthew the words are, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." The kingdom of God is the kingdom which Christ is erecting and bringing to its highest perfection and glory, and comprehends God's moral kingdom in its whole extent, in which is the full and most complete display of the divine perfections, or glory, and all the good and happiness of the creation. This is "that great city, the holy Jerusalem," which St. John saw "descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God." (Rev. xxi. 10, 11.) To seek this kingdom *first* is to make the interest, happiness, and glory of it our ultimate end, so as to do all for its sake, and subordinate every thing to this. This kingdom, considered in its full extent and all its appendages, is the first, the only object of the desires and pursuit of Christ himself; so that, in these words, he directs his disciples to imitate him, and be holy as he is holy.

By "his righteousness" is not meant any thing distinct from "the kingdom of God." It intends the divine perfections displayed in this kingdom in the glorious work of redemption, including the salvation of the redeemed and the complete overthrow of all his enemies. In this sense the word is used in the following passages: "The Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all nations." "And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory." (Isa. lxi. 11; lxii. 2.) "Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord: for the Lord shall comfort Zion. My salvation shall be forever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished. Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear ye not the reproach of men: for the moth shall eat them

II. It will serve to confirm what has been observed concerning the law of God, and further show what true holiness is according to Scripture, if we consider what is that divine love which is there represented as the holiness of God, or that in which his moral character and glory is revealed, in conformity to which the holiness of man consists.

St. John says, "God is love:" by which it is evident he means to express the whole of God's moral character; and we have a good warrant to take his words in this sense from the divine law, which is a transcript of God's moral character, and requires nothing but *love*. The apostle tells us how this love appears, and wherein is the greatest manifestation of it to man, viz., in giving his Son to die for the redemption of man, and accomplishing all that good which is comprised in it. "In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." (1 John iv. 8, 9.) This is wholly love of good will, as expressed in the highest act of kindness, and is the most perfectly disinterested love, as it is exercised towards enemies. This is elsewhere spoken of as that in which the love of God appears in its greatness, excellence, and glory. "But God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. v. 8.) This highest instance of the most disinterested benevolence is thus spoken of, as that in which the divine character, or God's holy love, is acted out and set forth to our view. It hence appears that disinterested benevolence is the love in

up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool; but my righteousness shall be forever, and my salvation from generation to generation." (Isa. li. 1–8.) Here, to "follow after righteousness" and "seek the Lord" is to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. And God's *righteousness* and his *salvation* mean the same thing. This being so, when St. Luke mentions this injunction of our Lord, he puts it in the following words: "But rather seek ye the kingdom of God" — this including the whole; for if "his righteousness" was not included in this, it would not be omitted.

The same thing is inculcated by Christ when he directs and encourages all to subordinate every thing, however dear to them, to this grand interest, and forsake all "for the kingdom of God's sake." (Luke xviii. 29.) It is observable that in a parallel text, (Mark x. 29,) instead of "the kingdom of God's sake," the words are "for my sake and the gospel's," because these words express the very same thing. The kingdom of God and the gospel are the same; therefore, to preach the gospel is to preach the kingdom of God. (Luke iv. 43; ix. 2, 60. Acts xx. 25.) And it is called the gospel of the kingdom of God. (Mark i. 14.) And as this is Christ's kingdom and interest, comprising himself and the whole which he seeks, whatever is done for the sake of the kingdom of God is done for his sake.

The holiness of the Mediator is wholly exercised in seeking this kingdom; his righteousness, by which sinners are justified, consists in what he did and suffered for its sake. And the holiness of men consists wholly in seeking this kingdom, which is love to God and their neighbor, or universal disinterested benevolence.

which God's holiness consists. Therefore we are called upon to imitate this love of God, as that by which we may be like him, partakers of his holiness. St. John says, when speaking of this love of God, "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us." If we love one another with that love which God exercised and manifested in giving his Son to die for us, we by this are conformed to God, his image is in us, and his love, which is his holiness, is complete and perfect in us. What words could more expressly declare that the divine holiness consists most essentially in disinterested goodness, and that, in the exercise of this, we are holy as God is holy? To the like purpose is what Christ says to his disciples. When he is recommending to them the highest exercise of disinterested benevolence, in love to their enemies, he tells them that they would hereby imitate God, who is good to his enemies; and then says, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." (Matt. v. 44, 48.) According to this, the holiness and perfection of God and his people consist, so much at least, in disinterested benevolence, that there is no moral perfection without it in God or the creature. The reader will observe how exactly parallel these words of Christ are to those of St. John we have been considering. He says, if we love one another with a love of pure benevolence, like that which God exercised in giving his Son to die for sinners, "God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us." Christ says, that in the exercise of this love, his disciples shall be perfect, as their heavenly Father is perfect.

The same thing is declared by St. Paul. When speaking of God's love and mercy to sinners in forgiving sin, and of the love of Christ in dying for sinners, which are instances of disinterested goodness, he says to the Ephesian Christians, "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children, and walk in love." (Eph. iv. 32; v. 1, 2.) Here he directs Christians to disinterested benevolence, by which they would imitate God's holiness, exercised in love to sinners.

Thus we see the holy love of God is represented as consisting in disinterested benevolence and goodness, the highest and most remarkable exercise of which appears in redemption, in giving his Son to die for sinners, that they might live through him; and that the holiness of men consists in imitating this benevolent love. Hence it appears, that, according to Scripture, holiness consists in benevolence and what is implied in it, and in nothing else.

Objection. It is granted that holiness consists in part in

love of benevolence, especially as it respects indigent creatures; but God's holiness does not consist wholly or chiefly in good will to men, but in love to himself; and the holiness of men consists principally in love to God. And it does not appear from these Scriptures that this love to God, either in God or the creature, is of the nature of benevolence, but may be something else, and so holiness may not consist principally in benevolent, disinterested affection.

Ans. 1. According to these Scriptures, God's love of benevolence is spoken of as the most bright and striking expression of the excellence of his nature and character, or his holiness; and that love in us which is an imitation of this love of God, is represented as that in which our conformity to God consists, which could not be true, or a proper representation, if holiness consisted chiefly in something of another kind not included in this. We have therefore good ground to conclude from these passages, that this is the leading excellence, and the sum of all holiness in God and the creature, especially as holiness exercised toward the creature must be of the same nature with that of which God is the object. But more especially, as the object of holy love, God and the creation is, in a sense, one and the same, or are united in one object, the kingdom of God, as has been shown. According to this, loving our neighbor is really loving God, as love to God is implied in it. This seems to be expressed by St. John in the passage we have been considering. "No man hath seen God at any time; if we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us;" i. e., by loving one another, while we see and converse with each other, with the love of benevolence and kindness in doing good to others, our love to God is expressed in the best and most perfect manner; especially as we herein imitate God, and follow him as his dear children.*

Ans 2. If this love of benevolence, this amazing goodness of God's nature, expressed in redeeming sinners, and giving them eternal life through Christ, is so much the glory of the divine character, and such a clear and bright expression of his perfection and holiness, as is represented in Scripture, this gives us reason to conclude that the love of which he himself is the object is of the same nature and kind with this, viz., an infinite benevolent regard to himself; and that his love to man, expressed in giving his Son for his salvation, is a stream,

* Dr. Doddridge has, I think, given the true sense of this text, in his paraphrase, in the following words: "But as he [God] is the great fountain of benevolence, if we love one another, it appears that God dwelleth in us, and that his love is perfected in us; for this is the best proof we can give of our love to him, and of the prevalence of his grace in our hearts, transforming us into his image."

and the brightest emanation from this fountain of love, and so shows the nature of the infinite divine love and holiness. Therefore creatures have no need of any thing but this love, in order to be like God, little images of his infinite benevolence.

Ans. 3. God's love and regard to himself is not excluded, but necessarily included, in this instance of his benevolence to sinners, in giving his Son to die, that they, through him, might live. This love to himself must be kept in view, in order to see his benevolence in giving his Son to die for sinners; for had God no benevolent regard to himself and care for his own honor, there would have been no need of giving his Son, that sinners might live, as a mediator would have been needless, in order to his being reconciled to sinners. So that God's supreme regard to himself is supposed, yea, expressed and brought clearly into view, in giving his Son to the world. And it is that regard to himself and his own honor, which consists in benevolence and its attendants and fruits, of which his benevolence to man is an emanation and fruit, or rather, they are one and the same thing, acted out in the work of redemption. In this view, we may see how God's love in giving his Son to die for sinners is a specimen and most clear display of his holiness, which consists in benevolence, and why men are represented as imitating God in the exercise of the love of benevolence; their love to God and one another being one and the same undivided affection.

What God says to Moses, when he besought him to show him his glory, serves to confirm what has been said on the above passages of Scripture. In answer to Moses's petition, God says to him, "I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee, and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy." (Ex. xxxiii. 19.) God here tells Moses how he would show his glory, and what it consisted in, viz., goodness — sovereign goodness and mercy, which is the most disinterested benevolence possible. If God showed Moses his glory, by causing all his goodness to pass before him, then God's holiness, or his moral character, consists in goodness; for holiness is his glory. And we are told how he did this: "The Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth;* keeping

* By *truth* nothing distinct from goodness is intended; it denotes the immutability of divine goodness; it is goodness that never fails, and may be depended upon with the greatest safety. Where there is no goodness, there is no truth and faithfulness; and these are properties essential to the goodness of God.

mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." (Ex. xxxiv. 6, 7.) Here there is nothing expressed but the highest, God-like benevolence, or disinterested goodness. This therefore is that in which God's glory consists; consequently this is the divine holiness, and this is the glory into which men are changed by the Spirit of God, when they are made partakers of his holiness.

When it is added, "and that will by no means clear the guilty," nothing is expressed contrary to goodness, or different from it; but it expresses the peculiar excellence and perfection of God's goodness. It is a goodness which regards the greatest good of the whole; a goodness which regards the interest and honor of the divine Being; so that none of his rights shall be given up, or his law set aside, in favor of man, that mercy may be shown to him. This is the thing meant by his not clearing or acquitting the guilty. This is the same goodness which is opened and celebrated in the gospel, manifested in God's giving his Son to die for the redemption of sinners, and granting them pardon and life through him. In this, God's love and regard to himself, and goodness and mercy to sinners, are joined together as one and the same undivided thing. It is all divine benevolence, and it is the same goodness when it condemns and punishes the guilty as when it pardons and saves the believer in Christ. This goodness, this disinterested good will, is the glory of God. In this divine holiness the glory of God's moral character consists; and so far as men exercise this goodness, they are holy as God is holy.

III. We are under great advantages to know what is true holiness, by the character and example of Christ. He is the great pattern of holiness, as it respects God and the creature, and the most bright and perfect instance of it that ever was or will be on earth, he has acted it out to the life. He is both God and man, and if we can find what is the true moral excellence of his character, we shall at the same time learn what divine and creature holiness is, as it respects both God and man. It wholly consisted in conformity to that law which he himself said was fulfilled by love to God and our neighbor. Therefore it all consisted in love; and if we properly attend to what he has said and done, we may, with the greatest certainty, determine the nature and kind of this love. His love to men was, in the highest degree, disinterested benevolence, as it was love to enemies, and such a regard for their good as to lead him to be willing to take their misery on himself, and bear it

all, that they might escape and live forever. This is the highest instance of pure, disinterested benevolence that ever was known, and it is commonly spoken of as such, and the excellency of it is owned to consist very much in its being in such a striking degree disinterested love and goodness. Thus Christ's example of love to men consists wholly in disinterested goodness. If this is left out, there remains nothing holy and excellent.

His love to God was also a disinterested, benevolent love, as it was acted out in seeking and promoting the glory of God. He sought not his own glory, but the glory of Him that sent him. And this he himself speaks of as that in which the distinguishing excellence of his character consisted. (John vii. 18; viii. 50.) This was the great thing he pursued, as the work he had to do. "I have glorified thee on earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." (John xvii. 4.) He subordinated every thing to this, and for its sake he gave up his own ease, and willingly endured the greatest sufferings. When in the view of his terrible sufferings he was reconciled to them and willing to go through them, it was from a zeal for God's glory; and he expressed his whole heart in this matter, when he said, "Father, glorify thy name." (John xii. 28.) As if he had said, "Let God be glorified, and all my ends are answered; for the sake of this I have undertaken this work, and am willing to go through the dreadful scene of sufferings that is before me." Thus, "Christ pleased not himself, but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me." (Rom. xv. 3.) He pleased not himself, i. e., he sought not himself, was not in the least degree selfish, but at the greatest distance from it. He had such a strong, disinterested, benevolent regard to the glory of God in the advancement of his kingdom, in the salvation of men, that all the reproach cast upon God by sin fell with its full weight on him; and that he might vindicate the divine character, and take away the reproach that would come on God and his law if sinners were saved without a complete atonement, he took the reproach and punishment of sin on himself, that hereby God might be honored in the salvation of sinners. Thus he pleased not himself, but practised the greatest self-denial, and took all the evil on himself, that God might be glorified and sinners be saved. This St. Paul mentions as an example to his disciples, in following which, they must not please themselves, must not be selfish, and seek themselves, but the good of others, in the exercise of disinterested benevolence. (Verses 1, 2.) Thus he himself followed Christ, and imitated his holiness, while he

sought not his own profit, but the profit of many, that they might be saved.* (1 Cor. x. 33; xi. 1.)

And here, by the way, we may see how Christ sought one undivided interest in the exercise of disinterested benevolence. He was devoted to the greatest general good, the glory of God in the salvation of sinners; or that kingdom of God in which God is glorified in the highest degree, and all the good of the creature is comprised. So that his being wholly devoted to the glory of God, in all he did and suffered, was not in the least inconsistent with his benevolence to man, nor did in any degree exclude it; but the latter is implied in the

* When the apostle says, "I seek not mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved," he expresses the most disinterested benevolence, and a disposition to give up every thing that could be called his own, to promote the salvation of many. In this he followed Christ, who pleased not himself, and sought not his own profit, but gave himself away, delivered himself up to infinite evil for the sake of others, that they might be saved. These words lead us to the true sense of that passage which has been so difficult to many: "For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." (Rom. ix. 3.) The plain meaning of these words is, that he interested himself so much in the salvation of his brethren, that he was willing to give up all his own personal interest in Christ for their sakes, if by this means they might be saved. This is the genuine expression of disinterested benevolence, which always gives up a less good for a greater, and the private good of individuals for the sake of the public good, or the salvation of many. Therefore, if the apostle could save all his brethren by giving up his own personal interest in Christ, he ought to be ready to do it; for not to do it, in this case, would be to seek his own profit in opposition to the profit of many, and to act most contrary to benevolence and to the example of Christ, who gave himself a ransom for many, and was willingly made a curse that men might be saved from it.

I know there have been many objections made to this sense of the words. It is said, this represents the apostle as willing to be an enemy to Christ, and to be damned forever, which is impossible.

Answer. It is, indeed, a contradiction that he should be willing to become an enemy to Christ, in the exercise of that benevolence in which he imitated him, and acted as his friend; especially that this benevolence should make him willing to be Christ's enemy. But no such thing is expressed in the words. The apostle might be willing to give up his own personal interest in Christ for the sake of the salvation of millions, and yet not be willing to be an enemy to Christ; and, indeed, it was impossible he should be an enemy to him, while in the exercise of such benevolence, just as impossible as it was that he should be willing his brethren should all be lost, while he was ardently wishing their salvation, though it were at the expense of his own.

As to his being willing to be damned, he was willing to give up all the happiness and suffer all the evil which was consistent with his benevolence to his brethren, and the love to Christ implied in this. But this benevolence was inconsistent with his being really miserable; for he would be so gratified in their salvation by his means, and he so placed his happiness in this that he must be in a great degree happy, much more so than he could be in any possible enjoyment which he should have at the expense of their salvation, or while destitute of this benevolence.

I am sensible this sense of the words is most contrary to all selfish religion; but it is perfectly consistent with that charity, that disinterested benevolence, which "seeketh not her own," but the profit of many, that they may be saved, without which it is impossible to be a true follower of Christ.

former, and the more benevolence he exercised towards God in seeking his glory, the more love did he exercise and discover to man. So that Christ did not only seek the glory of God and the salvation of men, and express his love to God and man in the same actions, but this was one and the same undivided affection which centred in one and the same thing, the greatest happiness and glory of God's kingdom, or the greatest good of the whole; so that he really sought but one thing, which is all comprised in the glory of God. And this may serve to remove a difficulty which has risen in the minds of some persons, with respect to this. They have asked, "If the ultimate end of Christ in what he did and suffered was the glory of God, so that this was the greatest, and, in a sense, the only thing he had in view, and this induced him to be willing to suffer unto death, how can he be said to lay down his life for man out of pure benevolence to him? He never would have done this, had it not been for the love he had to God, and regard for his glory. What reason, then, has the sinner to thank him for doing it out of love to him? Certainly, if he was chiefly influenced in this by love to God, his regard to man had but a proportionably small influence in this affair."

The solution is, the benevolence which Christ exercised towards God and towards men is one undivided affection. The glory of God and the salvation of men by Christ are not to be distinguished as different objects of pursuit. Therefore in seeking the glory of God he sought the salvation of men, and in seeking the salvation of men he sought the glory of God, the one being necessarily included in the other. And in this does the holiness, the moral excellence of Christ consist, according to Scripture. Therefore we are left at no loss about the nature of true holiness in God and in the creature. It consists in disinterested benevolence, and all that affection which is included in this, in opposition to self-love.

Objection. But Christ himself sought his own interest and glory, and had respect to the recompense of reward, "who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross," etc. (Heb. xii. 2.)

Ans. 1. Jesus Christ, in the exercise of disinterested benevolence, sought the glory of God and the highest happiness and glory of his kingdom in the salvation of men, as the greatest good. In this he placed his happiness and joy. This was the great end he sought in enduring the cross; this was the joy that was set before him. Therefore he was so far from pleasing or seeking himself in this, that the reward he sought was the object of disinterested affection, and nothing else. His benevolence set this up as a good, for the sake of which he was willing to give up his life and suffer an ignominious death.

Ans. 2. Christ's own honor and interest is included in the glory of God and the greatest good of the creation. As God, his own glory is the same with the glory of the Father; as man, his interest is great, as well as of infinite importance, to the good of the whole. Therefore, as has been shown, disinterested benevolence, or love to God and men, implies a regard to himself and a joy in his own happiness and glory. There is not the least degree of selfishness in this, but it is essential to disinterested benevolence.

IV. We may learn what is the nature of true holiness from what Christ says to his disciples: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." (Matt. v. 43–48.)

On this passage of Scripture we may observe the following things: —

1. What our Savior here condemns is selfishness, which had been, by the Jewish teachers, justified and inculcated as true holiness and obedience to the divine law, requiring us to love our neighbor as ourselves. By our neighbor, they understood one who is kind to us and our hearty friend. And our enemy they distinguished from neighbor, and put in opposition to him, and taught that the latter is to be hated, that it is our duty to do so, and the former loved. This interpretation made the command very easy indeed, and brought it down to suit the heart of the most wicked man on earth. And all the selfish religion that is taught now is as agreeable to corrupt nature as this was then; which leads me to observe, —

2. Christ condemns this, and enjoins directly the contrary, even the most disinterested good will, in loving our worst enemy with that kind, benevolent affection which will lead us to do him all the good in our power.

3. He shows that this selfish love has nothing of the nature of true holiness, by observing that sinners, even the worst of them, exercised such love. They love those that love them; for selfishness itself will do this. And, by the way, Christ not only condemns selfishness here as no part of holiness, and in opposition to it, but his argument supposes that publicans and sinners, yea, all that are not the children of God, are wholly destitute of holiness; for if they were not, his argument would not be conclusive.

4. Therefore love to enemies is here enjoined as essential to the character of a disciple of Christ, so that no love which does not imply this disinterested benevolence, or love to enemies, is the love in which holiness consists, by which the true disciples of Christ are distinguished from others, every thing else which does not imply this being found with sinners. According to this, disinterested benevolence, or that love which will extend to enemies, is the holy love which distinguishes the true disciples of Christ from all others, and nothing will pass for true holiness in Christ's account but such love and what is implied in it.

5. It is by such love alone that they are conformed to God, and formed after the likeness of his moral perfection or holiness. When Christ tells his disciples that, by loving their enemies, they should be the children of their Father which is in heaven, i. e., imitators or followers of God as dear children, it is implied that they could become so by nothing else. So that, in this view, this kind of love is represented as the only holy love, as it is the only love by which they imitate God. And it hence follows, also, that this is the love in which the divine holiness consists; for if it consisted in any thing of another kind, which this did not imply, they might be like God without love to their enemies. According to this representation, God's holiness, which consists in love to himself and his creatures, is such, that it carries in its nature love to enemies, and therefore that love which is not of such a nature is not true holiness. Therefore the Christian's love to God and Christ is of the same nature with love to enemies, which is disinterested benevolence, and in this his holiness consists.

6. We may also observe from this passage, though it is not immediately to the point we are upon, that the holy love by which Christians are distinguished from others will love God, even though he were our enemy; therefore it is not necessary we should see him to be our friend, or that he loves us, in order to our loving him. They who hold this, and that all true love to God is of this kind, teach a selfish religion, directly contrary to what Christ taught, and which he said publicans and sinners might have as well as Christians. If we cannot be Christ's disciples unless we have a heart to love our enemies, even such as are so unjustly, and are doing us all the injury they can, then none are his disciples who have not a heart to love God, even though he is their enemy, and disposed to curse and destroy them, who cannot be an unjust and injurious enemy. Surely that disposition which will love an enemy, who is unjustly and injuriously so, will not find it hard to love an enemy who is so with the highest reason and

justice. And all true love to God is of this kind. It is such a generous, disinterested, benevolent affection, that it is so far from originating from a belief of his love to us, that we should continue to love him, even though he appeared to be our enemy; and that love which would fail in this case is not true holiness. Therefore, it is certain that he who does not love his enemies does not love God with a true, holy love. This is, at least, implicitly asserted here by our Savior.

V. That all true holiness consists in disinterested, benevolent affection, and what is implied in this, is evident from what St. Paul says, (1 Cor. xiii.) Here the apostle speaks of charity as comprising all real holiness, or true religion, by which he means that love to God and our neighbor which the law of God requires.*

He says, whatever gifts and attainments a man may have which may be without this love, he is still nothing, and they will be no profit to him; and whatever exercises he has, and whatever he may do or suffer, and not have this love, he is yet nothing; by which it is very strongly asserted that love is true holiness, and that nothing else has any thing of this nature. In giving the character of this holy love in its exercises, he says, it "seeketh not her own." (1 Cor. xiii. 5.) This ascertains the nature of this love beyond dispute. It is not self-love, in whole or in part, for this always seeks its own, and nothing else: yea, it is set in opposition to self-love: it *seeketh not* her own. Nothing can answer to this description but that disinterested affection which consists in benevolence and what is implied in it, and this answers to it exactly; it is so described here that nothing else can be meant. Therefore, the apostle exhorts Christians to exercise this same holy love in the following words: "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth." (1 Cor. x. 24.) "Let no man seek his own;" i. e., *as his own*, in a selfish way: all selfishness is wholly forbidden; let him put on that holy love which seeketh not her own, but something else, viz., the general good of all. This charity, this benevolent, disinterested affection, is the only bond of holy union among intelligent beings; therefore, it is called "the bond of perfectness," i. e., the most perfect bond. (Col. iii. 14.)

VI. The words of St. Paul — "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. x. 31) — might be mentioned here as pointing out the nature of holiness as exercised towards God. It is such a

* The word in the original signifies *love*, and ought to have been so translated here, as it is above a hundred times in the New Testament.

love to God which implies and consists in seeking his glory constantly in every action; but nothing but benevolence will do this. It is strange that any should think good will is not to be exercised towards God, when we are in every thing to seek his glory; for the least reflection on the matter must convince every one that nothing but good will, or friendly affection towards God, will seek his glory, or care any thing about it. This is to be constantly exercised towards God, so as, in the strength of it, to devote ourselves, every action, all we are and all we have, to his interest and glory; and this is to exercise kind, disinterested affection towards God, in which we give up every other interest for the sake of his glory.

VII. Christians are expressly said to live not unto themselves, but unto Christ. "And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." (2 Cor. v. 15.) "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord." (Rom. xiv. 7, 8.) Here the Christian's life of holiness is set in opposition to self-love, in which men live unto themselves, which was their case before their conversion, and denotes a state of total corruption. I say Christian holiness is opposed to this, and, therefore, must be disinterested affection — a benevolent regard to Christ, by which men devote themselves wholly to him, living to his glory, and seeking the advancement of his kingdom, which implies love to men and seeking the greatest general good.

VIII. Scripture holiness is that by which men devote and consecrate themselves to God, to be wholly for his use and service. This is expressed by being holy unto God; it is, therefore, called "holiness to the Lord." It is with reference to this that all men and things, which were in a peculiar manner consecrated to the service of God by the Jewish ritual, were called *holy*, as there was in this consecration an outward image and resemblance of true holiness, which is a voluntary consecration to God and devotedness to his service. This is the same with giving themselves to the Lord. (2 Cor. viii. 5.)

This will lead us to place holiness in that universal benevolence which has the kingdom of God for its object, and subordinates all to this. This consecrates a man to God, his honor, interest, and kingdom, in the strongest manner, and effectually draws him off from every other interest; and no other kind of affection will do this. Therefore, this is holiness, according to Scripture.

Who can attend to this Scripture account of holiness, and not be sensible that universal disinterested goodness is the

leading and most essential thing in it, and that where this is wanting there is no holiness, and this implies the whole? The word "love" is seldom, if ever, used in any other sense in the Bible, where a holy affection is meant; and this is perfectly agreeable to the account that has been given of true holiness, which is the only reasonable, consistent idea that can be given of it, viz., that it is universal benevolence, and all that love of complacency and delight, and every disinterested affection which is implied in this, and cannot take place without it.

SECTION VII.

Objections answered.

Obj. I. True Christians ought to have respect to the reward they shall receive in heaven for what they do and suffer in this world. It is expressly asserted that Moses had, and is spoken of as part of the excellence of his character. This is contrary to the disinterested affection in which it is said all true religion consists.

Ans. 1. If the recompense of reward that Moses had respect to consisted in being confirmed in God's service and favor forever, and put under the greatest advantages to glorify God and promote the interest of his church, and in seeing this accomplished to the highest degree, then there was nothing selfish in this, but it was the genuine exercise of that disinterested religion which consists in love to God and our neighbor. The disinterested, benevolent person seeks a recompense of reward as much as any other person can, and more; but it is a reward with which benevolence itself is well pleased, and not selfishness. Selfishness never seeks the reward which God gives his people; this is suited to gratify benevolence only; therefore, it is respected and sought only in the exercise of benevolence.

Ans. 2. It has been observed that the benevolent person seeks his own highest good, as this is included in the highest good of the whole, and that his attention and concern is more particularly turned to this interest, as it is more in his view, and is more especially under his care, and he is under better advantages to promote it, than the interest of another. Therefore it is no argument of selfishness in Moses, or any other man, that he has respect to his own future happiness.

Obj. II. The promises and threatenings in God's word are all directed to self-love. They suppose that all men have self-love, and are suited to influence this, and nothing else.

If a person has nothing but disinterested affection, promises and threatenings will be of no use to him. If men ought not to have any self-love, why does God address himself to that in his word, and seek to lead men to avoid sin and practice holiness, in the exercise of self-love?

Ans. 1. The promises and threatenings in the Word of God suppose men possessed of a desire after happiness, with an aversion to evil and a regard for their own interest, answerable to its worth. This is so far from being inconsistent with the most disinterested affection, that it is implied in it, as has been proved at large.* Therefore, promises of good and threatenings of evil are as much suited to influence the benevolent person as him that is selfish.

Ans. 2. The good promised is a good which benevolence seeks, and it has the most perfect aversion to the evil threatened; and the benevolent person has a much more clear and realizing view and sense of the greatness and desirableness of the good and the dreadfulness of the evil than the selfish person can have. This being so, the promises and threatenings in the Bible are so far from supposing that men ought to regard them from self-love, or that there is any selfishness in true religion, that their proper end is answered only in them who are influenced by disinterested benevolence; and such only pay a proper regard to them. The selfish person may be influenced many ways, and to a great degree, by the threatenings and promises in God's word; they may excite high hopes and great fears, and restrain him from many things he would otherwise practice, and lead him to do many things; but they will not influence him to forsake sin and practise holiness, or to love God and his neighbor; but after all, he is as much under the power of sin as ever.

And it is to be observed, that the promises are not made to selfish exercises and doings, and therefore, rightly understood, are not suited to encourage self-love, but benevolence. All the promises and threatenings in the Bible oppose selfishness, and are calculated to destroy it and encourage disinterested affection, love to God and our neighbor, so far are they from encouraging self-love.

Christ promises honor and exaltation to them who humble themselves. Should any one hence infer, that this promise was designed to encourage pride in seeking exaltation and honor, and that pride is a duty, he would be guilty of great absurdity and self-contradiction; for this would be saying a man ought to exercise pride in seeking humility, and that

* See pp. 22, 23.

Christ has set before us a motive to excite pride, in order to induce us to be humble. This promise is so far from encouraging pride, that it tends to destroy it. The honor and exaltation promised is not that which pride seeks, but that which is most opposite to it. And should a proud man be hence influenced by his pride to seek humility, he might put on some external appearances of it, but he would be as far as ever from real humility, for, by the supposition, all his exercises are exercises of pride, and humility is not the object of his desire, but of his aversion. This may serve to illustrate the case before us, and show how far the divine promises are from being suited to encourage pride and selfishness, and that they encourage nothing but benevolence. And it also leads to another answer.

Ans. 3. The great and chief good which is promised in the Word of God is not a good that pleases selfish persons, and therefore is not designed nor suited to excite self-love. As the duties to which the promises are made are contrary to self-love, so is the chief good that is promised. The honor and exaltation promised to humility are as contrary to pride as is humility itself. The honor which the proud man seeks is not the same which Christ promises to him who humbleth himself, but entirely of a different nature, and contrary to it. A person who humbles himself renounces that self-exaltation and honor, in comparison with other beings, which pride and selfishness seek, and places his honor and happiness in abasing himself, and becoming the servant of all, by exalting God, and promoting his glory, and serving his fellow-creatures, ministering to their greatest good in the exercise of universal benevolence; and so obtains true exaltation and honor, which is most contrary to selfishness and pride. So the happiness in general, which is the subject of divine promises, is not a happiness which suits self-love, nor can it be induced to desire and seek it. This is a happiness which consists in glorifying God and promoting the interest of his kingdom — in devoting ourselves wholly to this, and seeing it promoted to the highest degree. This good is therefore just as contrary to self-love as is universal, disinterested benevolence. This good is suited to please the benevolent, and excite them to pursue the practice of holiness, and seek this glory, honor, and happiness; but to self-love, is the object of aversion.

If these things are well considered, it will appear how groundless this objection is. If the benevolent person is as capable of being influenced by promises and threatenings as any one else, and much more, and these are suited to animate him in the practice of disinterested, universal benevolence and

goodness; if the promises and threatenings in the Bible are, in a peculiar manner, suited to encourage and promote benevolence; if neither the duty to which the promises are made, nor the chief good promised, is agreeable to self-love, nor can be chosen and embraced by it, — then there being so many promises and threatenings in the Bible is not the least evidence that true religion does not consist in disinterested affection, or that self-love is any part of it. But the contrary appears with strong and irresistible evidence, even from these considerations.

Obj. III. There is not such a difference and opposition between what is called benevolence and self-love as has been supposed; nor is there any such thing as disinterested benevolence; men are seeking their own happiness in all their affections and exercises. He that seeks the good of another does it because he takes pleasure in it, and he seeks his own pleasure and happiness as much as he who seeks his own personal good only, and the one is as much self-love as the other. And men are friendly to one thing rather than another, because one gives them pleasure and the other does not; so that self-love is at the bottom of all, and one man is really as selfish as another; all the difference is, one man's selfishness operates in a different way from that of another man; all love springs from self-love, and cannot be distinguished from it.

Ans. 1. If by self-love the objector means a general appetite to happiness, and aversion to misery, or a capacity of pleasure and pain, it is granted that this takes place in benevolence as much as in self-love. But, as has been shown, this is in itself neither selfishness nor disinterested affection, but only a capacity for either.

Ans. 2. It is true that disinterested affection gives a higher pleasure and enjoyment than self-love, and therefore it is greatly for a person's interest to place his happiness in the glory of God and the interest of his kingdom, and the greatest good of mankind; but it does not hence follow, that the pleasure to be enjoyed in loving God and our neighbor is the cause of this love; or the inducement to a selfish person to love God, in order to answer a selfish end, and to make himself happy. I say this does not follow, for two reasons: —

1. This is to put the cause for the effect, and the effect for the cause. The ground and reason of a person's taking pleasure in the happiness of his neighbor is his disinterested good will to him, and not this pleasure the cause of his good will to his neighbor. But the objector supposes the latter, viz., that the pleasure a person has in benevolence is the cause of his loving his neighbor, which is absurd.

2. There is a contradiction in supposing that self-love will lead a person to place his happiness in his neighbor's good, for the latter stands in direct contradiction to the former. Selfishness is directly opposed to a person's placing his happiness in the good of another: this consists in an opposite affection, which selfishness cannot be reconciled to. Nor can the selfish person so much as have an idea of the enjoyment which attends benevolence; and, therefore, it is impossible that the happiness benevolence gives should be a prevailing motive with him to love and seek the happiness of another, that he may hereby make himself happy.

If one should suppose that because exaltation and honor is the certain attendant of humility, this will induce a proud man, in the exercise of his pride, to be humble for the sake of the honor he will obtain by it, and therefore that pride and humility are at bottom the same thing, and seek the same honor, the supposition would be as consistent and rational as that we are considering.

If a person places his happiness in the good of his neighbor, it may be asked, How came he to do this rather than another, and by what medium does he enjoy this pleasure? The answer must be this: The former is a friend to his neighbor, and this gives him pleasure in his happiness; whereas the latter is not his friend, and bears no good will to him, but regards his own interest only, and, therefore, cannot take pleasure in his neighbor's good. The characters of these two men are essentially different; their exercises are of a different and opposite nature. The latter is a lover of his own self only; the former loves his neighbor as himself, and is so united to him in disinterested good will, that he necessarily shares in his happiness. In this case he does not love his neighbor in order to get possession of his happiness; this is not the motive of his benevolence, for this is a contradiction. It is impossible he should get possession of his neighbor's happiness in this way and from this motive; for, so far as he acts from such a motive, he, by the supposition, cares nothing about it, and it is no happiness to him. Nothing but disinterested benevolence will give him a share in his neighbor's good; this is the ground and cause of his enjoying it, and not a desire of enjoying this happiness the ground of his benevolence. So far as a man desires to enjoy his neighbor's happiness from self-love, just so far he is incapable of enjoying it. The more he desires it, therefore, in this sense, the farther he is from it.

Ans. 3. Disinterested good will, which puts a man in possession of his neighbor's happiness, also makes him share in

his misery, if he is miserable, and bear his burdens: but this is most contrary to self-love; therefore, it is opposed to benevolence. If self-love would lead a person to take pleasure in his neighbor's happiness, and share in his good, and this were possible, it would not certainly desire to share in his misery, and so put him in possession of that too: but benevolence does this; therefore, it is not self-love, nor the fruit and offspring of it, but an affection of a different and opposite nature.

Obj. IV. Holiness consists in part in hatred of sin; therefore, it does not wholly consist in love, for hatred is opposite to love.

Answer. Hatred of sin is not opposed to the love of benevolence, for we may love them who are most vile and odious with a love of good will, and are commanded to do it; and God loved sinners with the greatest benevolence, while they were most odious to him and hated them with a perfect hatred of disapprobation and displacence. Thus we may, and are obliged to, love and hate the same persons at the same time, in many instances; — to love them with a love of good will, and yet hate them with a hatred of displacence.

Nor is this displacence and hatred of sin opposed to the love of complacence so as to imply any thing of a contrary nature. Hatred of sin is implied in all holy love; and that affection which takes complacence in holiness is exercised in the hatred of sin, it being in its nature one and the same thing exercised towards different objects. Love to God is, in its nature, displeasure at enmity against him, and necessarily hates those who hate him, not with the hatred of ill will, but of disapprobation and displacence.

SECTION VIII.

Inferences from the preceding View of the Nature of true Holiness.

I. From the view that has been given of holiness, we are led to observe the impropriety many have been guilty of in speaking of holy Christian love as consisting chiefly, if not wholly, in love of complacence. It has been very common, where love to God and love to our brother is spoken of and explained, very much, if not wholly, to overlook the love of benevolence, and keep the love of complacence chiefly or altogether in view. This is not agreeable to Scripture, which, I trust, appears from what has been said. The love of benevolence is chiefly kept in view there, as what comprehends the

whole of holy love; and we cannot have or communicate a proper notion of holiness, if we depart from the Holy Scripture in this particular. This has doubtless been the occasion of great confusion and many mistakes.

II. We may hence learn what true self-denial is, and in what it consists.

Our Lord teaches us that, in becoming his disciple, a man must deny himself — that there is no other way to become a Christian, and this must be practised in every step in which men follow him. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." (Luke ix. 23.) This self-denial consists most essentially in acting contrary to self-love, — in crossing that, and giving up the interest that it seeks for the sake of some other interest, — or, in giving up our own private personal interest for the sake of the glory of God and the greatest good of mankind, which is the same with exercising disinterested affection, or to love God with all our heart and our neighbor as ourselves. Self-denial consists in the exercise and practice of true holiness as it has been described above, and in nothing else; in which self is renounced, and men forsake the whole interest which self-love seeks, for the sake of the kingdom of God. Whatever men do or suffer, whatever they give up, for the sake of this, they deny themselves; and where there is nothing of this disinterested love exercised, there is no self-denial, whatever is done or suffered, as self is not in the least renounced. Christ himself is the most perfect example of self-denial, which consisted in seeking not his own glory, but the glory of the Father, and the greatest good of the creation, in promoting the kingdom of God; the whole of which is expressed by the apostle in the following words: "For even Christ pleased not himself."

Self-denial does not, therefore, consist merely in crossing our natural inclinations, in parting with that which is very dear to us, or going through great toil and sufferings to obtain some end. When this is done, not for our own sake, or from self-love, but for Christ's sake, or for the sake of the kingdom of God, it is true self-denial; but when it is done for our own sakes wholly, there is no self-denial in it. The most selfish creature in the world may part with one good for the sake of another, by which he greatly crosses some of his inclinations and appetites, and may go through great labor and sufferings, purely to please himself, or gratify his self-love. Thus a man may give up his ease, and practise hard service and toil throughout a whole year, for the sake of the wages he is to receive, while he is wholly selfish in what he does

and suffers, having no regard to any other interest but his own. So a man may be willing to do and suffer many things, and cross many of his own natural inclinations to a great degree, for the sake of his eternal interest, that he may obtain salvation, purely from self-love. In this there is no self-denial.

A man may give all his goods to the poor, and devote his whole life to the most severe discipline, and practise the greatest austerities imaginable, and then give his body to be burnt, with a view to escape hell and obtain heaven, and yet if he has not that charity which seeketh not her own, but does and suffers all wholly under the influence of self-love, there is no true self-denial in it, but it is as really self-gratification, and pleasing himself, as if he indulged his sensual appetites in riot and wantonness, and there is really no more true religion in it. For there is no more true holiness in desiring and seeking eternal happiness in a selfish way, and from self-love, than there is in desiring any temporal, worldly enjoyment.*

But here two questions arise, which may be worthy of particular consideration, as it may serve to throw some further light on this subject: —

I. Do persons give up their eternal interest in self-denial, so as not to have a selfish regard to this in their religious exercises? It is easy to see that persons may and ought to give up their own private, temporal interest in many instances, at least, and to a greater degree, for the sake of others, and to promote the general good. But is it not unreasonable, and even impossible, for them to disregard and give up their own eternal interest for the sake of others, or for any thing whatsoever?

Ans. 1. Whatever temporal good any one gives up for the sake of his own eternal interest, and wholly from self-love, he is, by the supposition, as selfish in this as he can be in any thing whatsoever; and therefore there is no self-denial in it, if self-denial is acting contrary to self, or denying ourselves. So that he who does not know how to deny himself with respect

* Of this sort, we have reason to think, are all the abstinences, fastings, prayers, whippings, and austerities, as well as giving large sums of money, practised by multitudes in the Popish world, for the sake of obtaining the heaven they have in view. And of the same kind are all the labors and painful doings and sufferings, all the reformations and abstinences, yea, every thing else that men do or suffer in the practice of religion, and with a view to obtain salvation in the Protestant world, or any where else, who act wholly from self-love, and have no disinterested regard to Christ and his kingdom. There is no self-denial in all this. But, by the way, the heaven and happiness which these selfish persons are seeking by all their pains, whether in Popish or Protestant countries, is no more like the true happiness and heaven than is the Mahometan paradise.

to his eternal interest, is really a stranger to self-denial. To give up our temporal, worldly interest, for the sake of eternal happiness, wholly under the influence of self-love, is as real an instance of selfishness as parting with all we have now to possess a large estate the next year. Therefore, if no person can renounce his eternal interest in opposition to a selfish regard to it, there is no such thing in nature as self-denial, or public, disinterested affection. But let it be kept in mind, that in the practice of the greatest self-denial a person does not divest himself of a love of happiness; for this is impossible, as has been shown, as well as contrary to the supposition. But he places his happiness, not in his own private interest, but in a good more worthy to be sought, viz., the glory of God and the prosperity of his church and kingdom. For the sake of this he gives up the former, and forgets himself.

Ans. 2. There is the same reason why self-love should be wholly crossed, in every instance, as there is that it should be crossed at all; so the same reason that our whole interest, so far as it is the object of self-love, should be given up, for the sake of an interest of unspeakably more worth.

True benevolence always seeks the greatest good of the whole, and is a disposition to give up the less good for the greater. That affection which hesitates at this, and makes any selfish conditions, is private affection, not public love. If benevolence will lead us to forsake our personal interest in any degree, it will lead us to forsake it wholly, for the greater good of others, if it is exercised to a sufficient degree, and there is nothing selfish in us to counteract and oppose it.

If we consider what God is, how infinitely great, important, and desirable, and of what infinite worth are his being, happiness, and glory, and how infinitely worthy and excellent he is; what an absolute and infinite right he has to us and to all creatures, to dispose of them as he sees fit, in his infinite wisdom and goodness, for his own happiness and glory, and for the greatest glory and happiness of his kingdom, — I say, if we well consider this, it must appear most fit and reasonable that we should love him above all, and without any reserve, i. e., with all our hearts, and give up ourselves wholly to him, to be for his use, that his ends may be answered by us, and he be, in the highest degree, blessed and glorified, and his kingdom most happy and glorious forever, let what will become of us, and without making any conditions with regard to ourselves. Therefore, it becomes us always to feel so towards God, and place our whole happiness in his felicity and glory, having in this sense no will of our own. But this is denying ourselves, and giving up the whole of our own

interest for his sake. A choosing to be wholly devoted to him, and to be and do every thing wholly for his sake, is to choose to do nothing for our own sakes; which is to give up the whole that self-love seeks.

If we make conditions in this case, and are willing that God should be supreme and have the whole disposal of us, and glorify himself by us, if he will secure our highest personal interest, and employ all his wisdom and goodness in our behalf, but are disposed to oppose this on any other condition, there is no disinterested affection to God in this, nor indeed any true love to him, nor is there any self-denial in it; yea, it is itself real opposition to God; and the most selfish creature, and the greatest enemy to God in the universe, may be brought to this, consistent with all his selfishness and enmity.

It is true, indeed, as has been shown, that the most disinterested affection does not exclude proper regard to our own being and interest, but necessarily includes it. But it must be observed, that if our own personal interest is inconsistent with the general good, universal benevolence will give it all up for the sake of this greater good; for to be unwilling to give up our own interest when the public good requires it, is criminal selfishness and enmity to being in general, and therefore enmity against God.

For the same reason for which I shall be willing that the interest of any individual in the universe should not be regarded, but given up, when inconsistent with the general good, I shall be willing to give up my own interest, on the same supposition, if I am governed by benevolence. Therefore, however great and important is our whole interest, temporal and eternal, we ought to be willing to give it all up, if it is inconsistent with the highest interest, the greatest glory of Him who is at the head of the universe, and the sum of all being and perfection, and true benevolence will do this; since the latter interest is infinitely greater and more important than the former, and that not worthy of any regard in comparison with this.

But this leads to another question.

II. How can our eternal interest be inconsistent with the greatest display of God's glory, and the highest interest of his kingdom? Are not these so united together that they cannot be separated? How, then, can the former be given up for the sake of the latter?

Answer. If we know that we are true Christians, we may be sure that it is for the glory of God and good of the whole that we should be eternally happy in his kingdom. But even in this case we are capable of making the supposition that it

would not be so; and, on this supposition, we shall be disposed to give up all our personal interest, so far as we are in the exercise of disinterested affection, and willing to deny ourselves. But, if we do not know that we have embraced the gospel, we cannot be sure that it is, on the whole, most for the honor of God, and the glory and happiness of his kingdom, that our eternal happiness should be secured; so we have opportunity to try how we shall feel and be disposed on such a supposition. In this case the language of supreme love to God will be to this purpose: "Let Infinite Wisdom dictate. Let GOD reign, and dispose of me and all creatures so as shall be most for his own glory, and the greatest good of the whole, whatever becomes of me and my interest." In this case, not to have Infinite Wisdom order, not to have God supreme and dispose as pleases him, so as to glorify himself in the highest degree, and make his kingdom most perfect and happy, would be a greater evil, infinitely greater, to the true friend of God and his kingdom, than the giving up his own personal interest; yea, on supposition his own interest and highest happiness is inconsistent with the glory of God, it will be worth nothing, and worse than nothing, to him. He will, therefore, say with Moses, "'Blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book.' If God may not be God, and order all things for his own glory and the greatest good of his kingdom, and if my salvation is inconsistent with this, I give all up, I have no interest of my own to seek or desire."

It is true he who has such disinterested benevolent exercises must be happy so long as God reigns, and is glorified, and his kingdom is in the highest degree advanced, because this, by the supposition, is become his good, or he places his happiness in this; and when he comes to know that he is thus devoted to God, he may be sure of his own eternal salvation. But let it be observed, he must *first* have such exercises of disinterested affection as these before he can have any evidence that he shall be saved; for he must become a friend to God before he can have any evidence that he is interested in his favor, and shall inherit eternal life.

III. How can we in any case give up our own eternal interest for God's sake, and for the interest of his kingdom, since, by devoting ourselves to God, we take the most sure and the only way to secure and promote our own highest good in our eternal salvation? Is there not an inconsistency in this?

ANSWER. Though a person, by giving himself to God in the exercise of disinterested affection, in this way denying himself for God's sake, does, indeed, take the most direct and

effectual way to true happiness, and to secure and promote his highest interest, yet he as really gives it up for God's sake as if he did not secure and promote it in this way; and he does as truly deny himself as if he did really and eternally lose his whole interest. Therefore, it does not hence follow that he is selfish, and seeks his own private interest in giving himself to God and loving God more than himself, for this is a contradiction, being the same as to say he is selfish, and loves himself more than God, in renouncing self, and loving God more than himself, and doing all for God's sake.

Christ, when speaking of self-denial, says, "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it." (Mark viii. 35.) That is, he who is so selfish as not to be willing to deny himself and give up his own interest, even all of it, for my sake, out of a disinterested regard to me and my kingdom, he shall miss of all true happiness, and must necessarily lose it forever. But he who, in the exercise of disinterested affection, denies himself for Christ's sake and the gospel's, and places his happiness in Christ's honor and interest, shall be really happy, and secure his highest interest forever. But it does not follow from this that a man seeks his own life and happiness in a selfish way, and so does all for his own sake in losing his life for Christ's sake and the gospel's, for this involves a contradiction; and if this could be, it would not be self-denial, but self-gratification.

III. What has been said of the nature of holiness will help us to distinguish between true religion and that which is false. The leading and most essential difference lies here: true religion consists in disinterested affection, and "seeketh not her own;" false religion wholly consists in selfish affections and exercises. The former is true holiness; the latter is nothing but sin.

This will serve as a touchstone by which we may try the various doctrines and schemes of religion which are embraced and contended for by professed Christians. If they are the dictates of universal disinterested benevolence, and suited to please and promote this, they are doctrines according to godliness; but if they are suited to gratify self-love only, and formed on a selfish plan, they have no foundation in Scripture.

There are many who professedly make self-love the foundation of all religion, and represent it as wholly a selfish thing from beginning to end. They do so who teach that love to God and all practical religion has its foundation wholly in a belief that God loves us and has forgiven our sins, and that the faith by which the just do live consists most essentially in

this belief; and this selfishness is involved in the scheme of religion that many others embrace. The "five points," so long disputed between Calvinists and Arminians, being examined by this criterion, it will appear, I doubt not, on which side the truth lies. The latter form a scheme of doctrines exactly suited to gratify the selfishness and pride of man — to exalt men at the expense of the honor of God, and happiness and glory of his kingdom. That of the former is suited to exalt God, and display the glory of his grace in the happiness and glory of his moral kingdom, and, therefore, is most agreeable to the dictates of universal benevolence.* He whose head and heart are truly formed upon this disinterested benevolent plan will not find it difficult to distinguish between those doctrines which are the dictates of selfishness and pride, and such as are suited to exalt God, and abase man, and set up the glory of God and his kingdom as the supreme end of all; and will cordially embrace the latter, and renounce the former.

And this will help us to a rule to "try the spirits" of men, so far as we are to judge of their hearts by their practice. A man appears to have true religion who embraces the doctrines which are according to godliness, and appears to be devoted to the honor of God and the Redeemer, and the advancement of his interest and kingdom in the world, for which he is at all times ready to spend and be spent; and he is kind to his fellow-men, doing good to all as he has opportunity, and especially good to the professed friends of Christ and his kingdom. He puts on "bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, etc.† (Col. iii. 12.) And if a person appears in his life and conversation to be wholly selfish and proud, seeking his own ease, pleasure, and honor rather than the honor of Christ and the promotion of his kingdom, and the good of mankind, whatever doctrines he professes to embrace, and however full of religious zeal and devotion he may appear to be at times, we have reason to conclude he is a stranger to true religion.

And by this rule every one may try his own religion. If it began in a belief that God loved him, and had bestowed salvation upon him, etc., and all his religious joy and sorrow, and

* The doctrines here referred to are, 1. God's decrees; 2. Original sin; 3. Man's moral impotency; 4. Justification by faith through imputed righteousness; 5. The perseverance of the saints. Calvinists take the positive side; Arminians, the negative.

† It is worthy of observation that a kind, benevolent spirit exercised towards men — especially the saints, in doing them good — is much spoken of in Scripture as an evidence of true religion; and the reason of this appears from the foregoing account of true holiness.

darkness and light, respect his own interest in God's favor, etc., it has the appearance of false religion.* He who comes to the knowledge of the truth fixes on something infinitely more important than self, and his own personal interest, as the object of his regard and pursuit. He from that moment devotes himself to the glory of God, and the greatest general good, in the advancement of his kingdom. From this time he begins to pray, and say, "Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as in heaven." And it now becomes his study and labor to promote this grand interest, by serving God and his generation, and thus he seeks first the kingdom of God. He whose religious discoveries, views, and exercises are not of this kind, and do not issue in this, may safely conclude himself a stranger to true religion.

If this most fundamental difference between true religion and false was attended to by public teachers, and they labored to keep it in view in all their descriptions of the Christian's character and exercises, and set the doctrines and precepts of the gospel in this light, it would tend to kill the false comfort and confidence of those who have a selfish religion, and undeceive them. And, on the contrary, it would tend greatly to the instruction, enlargement, and joy of the true friends of God and his kingdom.

But, instead of this, how common is it to hear the preacher speak of religion as if it consisted altogether in selfishness! To represent the hopes and fears, the joys and sorrows, and all the exercises of the Christian as wholly selfish, and treat of all the doctrines and duties of Christianity in this light! How

* Objection. St. John taught this religion. He says, "We love him, because he first loved us." (1 John iv. 19.)

Answer. What is asserted here is, that God's love is first in the affair. Had he not first loved us, and given his Son to die for us, and then called us by his grace, and given us a heart to love him, we had continued enemies to him. This is the plain sense of the words, and is agreeable to innumerable other passages of Scripture. Whereas the other sense is quite forced, and makes the words say what they do not. They are not, we love him because *we first believed* he loved us. Besides, such a sense is contrary to the whole run of Scripture, and the express declaration of our Lord, who says, there is no true religion in such love. See pp. 48, 49, 59, of the Inquiry. And it is contrary to the whole Bible in another view. According to Scripture, we can have no evidence of our interest in God's special love and pardoning mercy until we believe and embrace the gospel; and love to God, or what implies it, is the only evidence we can have that God loves us. It is therefore impossible, on good grounds, to believe God loves us with a design to save us, before we love him. We must *first* love him, before we can have the least evidence that God loves us. They therefore who believed God loved them, while they had no love to him, and have begun to love God wholly upon this belief, have believed a lie, in the face of the whole Bible; and all their religion is nothing but delusion.

common to find Arminians, Neonominians, professed Calvinists, Antinomians, or whatever other name they may bear, and however they may differ in other things, all agreeing in this! This is to stun and starve the true Christian, and feed and strengthen such as have a lie in their right hand.

ADVERTISEMENT.

Mr. Hart, in his Dialogues, asserted concerning the moral taste, common to all men, what was thought to be inconsistent with the total corruption of man described in the Holy Scripture, and of a very bad tendency. He was publicly told that Mr. Edwards, in his Dissertation on the Nature of True Virtue, had considered and confuted his notion of moral taste; and it was suggested that he ought first to answer Mr. Edwards, before he advanced so much on a tenet, which, it was thought, had been sufficiently exposed.* This led Mr. Hart to read that Dissertation, and he has since published "Remarks on it, showing that he has given a wrong idea and definition of virtue, and is inconsistent with himself." The following Appendix is an attempt to vindicate Mr. Edwards. The author would have been glad to be excused from this task; but since he was persuaded Mr. Edwards had given a right idea and definition of true virtue, and that it is of importance he should be vindicated, and Mr. Hart's objections answered, and as what has publicly passed between him and Mr. Hart seemed to point him out for this work, he has thought it his duty to undertake it, hoping it may be of some advantage to the cause of truth and virtue.

* See Animadversions on Mr. Hart's Dialogues, p. 21.

APPENDIX I.

AN ANSWER TO MR. HART'S REMARKS ON PRESIDENT EDWARDS'S DISSERTATION CONCERNING THE NATURE OF TRUE VIRTUE.

SECTION I.

Mr. Hart's Objections against Mr. Edwards's making True Virtue to consist primarily in Benevolence, which has universal Being for its primary Object, considered and answered.

Mr. Edwards, in his Dissertation on the Nature of True Virtue, has said it consists primarily in benevolence; and that the primary or first object of universal benevolence is simply being considered, or being in general, agreeable to the representation in the foregoing inquiry. To this Mr. Hart objects two things: —

First. He says that as being simply considered, or being in general, is neither God nor the creature, but an abstract idea, love to this object is not commanded; for we are commanded to love God and our neighbor only. According to Mr. Edwards, there ought to be another and a first command to love being in general. But as we find no such command, we may be sure there is no such duty, and that holiness does not at all consist in such love.

Answer. Love to being in general is obedience to the law of God, commanding us to love God and our fellow-creatures; for these are being in general, and comprehend the whole of being. He who does not exercise universal benevolence does not obey the first nor the second command; but he who loves being as such, or simply considered, which is the same as being in general, (and it is evident Mr. Edwards uses these terms as synonymous,) — I say, he who loves being in general loves God and his fellow-creatures, and, therefore, obeys the two great commands.

Objection. "This is no answer," says Mr. H. "According to this notion of the root or first principle of true virtue, love to God as well as to our neighbor is the offspring of this general indeterminate benevolence. And if it is fit to command or require the daughter affection, much more the mother love."

Ans. 1. If being in general was something distinct from God and the creature, and more than these, and not included in them, the objection would appear to have some foundation; but, as the case is, it is wholly groundless. If a particular member of a community or nation should be commanded to love the king and all his fellow-subjects, and he should be told this love must be primarily good will to all in general, and not to any individuals, exclusive

of the rest, would he have any reason to say this was not included in the command he had received, and that he was not by this bound to exercise this good will to the whole nation, as such, because he was to love only the king and his fellow-subjects? — that the whole nation, simply considered as such, or the nation in general, including king and subjects, was only "an abstract idea," including neither king nor his subjects, but something else which he must love *first*, and then from this "mother affection" the "daughter love" must flow, viz., love to the king and to his fellow-subjects? If not, what Mr. Hart has said is not reasonable.

Ans. 2. It will more fully appear how frivolous this objection is, if we consider *in what sense* being in general is the primary object of true benevolence. It means no more than that true benevolence is of the nature of love to being in general. This is fundamental and original in its nature, so that it cannot, from its very nature, be limited to any particular sort or circle of beings, but for the same reason it loves one, it loves all. Therefore, it regards individuals, and is exercised towards them, not in a limited, confined sense, but as part of the whole. In this view, it appears that love to God may be an affection which has being in general for its object; and its true nature, by which it is distinguished from every thing else, may consist in this, and yet there be no exercise of heart towards being in general, antecedent to love to God, of which love to God is the fruit and offspring. All that is asserted is, that this true love to God is a disposition to love being in general, and carries this in its very nature, else it would not be true benevolence.* And where is the ground of representing love to being in general as the "mother affection," and love to God and our neighbor as the "daughter love," when the matter is viewed in this light?

Secondly. Mr. Hart objects that Mr. Edwards, by making being in general the primary object of holy love, sets this up as supreme, and makes an idol of it, to which the first and supreme regard is to be paid, while nothing but a secondary, subordinate, inferior affection is left for God.

Answer. When it is said that being in general is the primary or first object of benevolent love, the meaning is that this affection, in its primary quality and distinguishing nature, has being in general, as such, for its object, and is a disposition to regard all, and not a part only; and that being in general is its first object, in distinction from benevolent being, which is a secondary object of benevolence and the primary object of complacence. This is not only consistent with God's being the chief and supreme object of this affection, but he is so *necessarily*, as Mr. Edwards has observed and proved in his second chapter.

Mr. Edwards took care to guard against both these objections of Mr. Hart's in the following words: "When I say true virtue consists in love to being in general, I shall not be likely to be understood that no one act of the mind, or exercise of love, is of the nature of true virtue, but what has being in general, or the great system of universal existence, for its direct and immediate object, — so that no exercise of love, or kind affection to any one particular being, that is but a small part of the whole, has any thing of the nature of true virtue, — but that the *nature* of true virtue consists in a disposition to benevolence towards being in general." "My meaning is, that no affections towards particular persons or beings are of the nature of true virtue, but such as arise from a generally benevolent temper, or from that habit or frame of mind, wherein consists a disposition to love being in general."

What can be plainer than this? According to this a person may love God supremely, with a love which has not universal existence for its direct and immediate object, only as God is, in a sense, universal existence; but God may be as much the first, direct, and immediate object in all respects as if

* See the preceding Inquiry, pp. 16, 17.

there were no other existence, and yet this love carry in its nature love to being, as such, or universal existence, and this be the ground and reason why it fixes on God as the supreme object, and distinguish it from every thing which is not holy love; for, if it were not a love which in its nature is love to being in general, it would not be true, holy love to God.

But it seems Mr. Hart has understood Mr. Edwards as he thought he should not be likely to be understood, and as he expressly declared he would not be understood: with how much reason and justice, the reader must judge.

Mr. Hart allows that, according to Mr. Edwards's scheme, God may be the primary, chief, and supreme object of the love of complacence.

But let us consider whether there are not as many and great difficulties in this as there are in making God the supreme object of benevolence to being in general. This, perhaps, may give us some further light in this matter.

The love of complacence has beauty, or beautiful, excellent being, for its object. Holy complacence has moral beauty in general, moral beauty as such, simply considered, for its object, and not any particular beauty, or the beauty of any particular being, as confined and limited to that, and exclusive of moral beauty in general. It is exercised towards particular beautiful beings as sharing in the beauty common to all holy beings, and is love to moral beauty in general as such; or, in other words, it is love of holiness for holiness' sake, simply considered as being what it is in its own nature. Therefore, love to particular holy beings has its first original and primary ground in love of holiness in general, and is really in its own nature love of holiness, as such, which distinguishes it from all affection which is not true love of holiness.

Mr. Hart's objection against benevolence, as Mr. Edwards has represented it, may be applied to this view of complacence in the following manner: "According to this doctrine, there ought to have been *three* great commands. The first, greatest, and most fundamental of all should have been thus, viz., Thou shalt love holiness in general, simply considered; for complacence in this is the root and mother of all complacential love, and all holy complacence primarily and most essentially consists in it. Secondly, subordinate to this, and as the first great branch of this root, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," etc. (See "Remarks," pp. 5, 6.) Is not this argument in all respects as strong and conclusive as when used by Mr. Hart against what Mr. Edwards has said of benevolence?

Mr. H. will doubtless acknowledge that God may be the supreme object of the love of holiness, as he is infinitely holy, and the fountain and sum of all holiness, and that he must be so to him who loves holiness in general, or for its own sake, simply considered, though he might not be the supreme object of any other kind of love which has not holiness, as such, for its primary object. And why must not this be as true of the love of benevolence, as Mr. Edwards has defined it?

Mr. H. uses the following argument to prove that God cannot be the supreme object of the benevolence Mr. Edwards describes:—

"Upon Mr. Edwards's principles, the absolutely great Being must have an incomparably greater share of the primary benevolence to being simply considered, than all other particular beings. Compared with them he has chief and supreme benevolent regard; but not so compared with the primary object of virtuous love, viz., being in general. That must be the chief object, for the great Being does not exhaust all being, so as to reduce all others to non-existence, or no degree of being. He infinitely outweighs all other beings, as put in the scale against him. But if his infinite degree of being is put into one scale, and the same be put into the opposite scale, and together with that the degrees of existence of all other beings, it is obvious this great Being's weight, in the opposite scales, will balance itself, and the whole weight of the other beings will remain clear and turn the scale. This

scale has in it the whole of the primary object of virtuous love, the other not; and the virtuous attraction, or tendency of primary benevolence to being, simply considered, is in proportion to the quantity of being."

Every one must see, at first view, that if this argument proves God cannot be the supreme object of universal benevolence, it equally proves he cannot be the supreme object of any love and regard in which the creature has the least share; and that the heart which has any regard to the creation, cannot pay supreme regard to God. But I will now apply it to the love of complacence in particular, by substituting that in room of benevolence, by which it will appear this argument will prove, if it proves any thing, that God cannot be the supreme object of complacence.

"Upon Mr. Edwards's principles, (and in the case before us, we may say, upon Mr. Hart's too,) the absolutely great Being must have an incomparably greater share of the love of holiness for holiness' sake, or the love of moral beauty in general, simply considered, than all other particular beings. Compared with them, he has the chief and supreme, complacential love; but not so, compared with the primary object of holy love, viz., holiness in general, or moral beauty, as such. That must be the chief object, for the great and most holy Being does not exhaust all holiness, so as to reduce all others to no degree of moral beauty. His holiness infinitely outweighs the holiness of all other beings, as put in the scale against him. But if his infinite degree of holiness is put into one scale, and the same be put into the opposite scale, and together with that, the holiness of all other holy beings, it is obvious this great Being's holiness in the opposite scales will balance itself, and the whole weight of the holiness of other beings will remain clear, and turn the scale. This scale has in it the whole of the primary object of the love of complacence, the other not; and the holy attraction, or tendency of primary complacential love to holiness in general, simply considered, is in proportion to the quantity of holiness." Mr. H. subjoins to this argument the following words: "How do false metaphysics entangle and mislead the greatest and best men, when they wander in them!" To whose metaphysics, Mr. Edwards's or Mr. Hart's, this exclamation is most properly applicable, the judicious reader, I suppose, will be at no loss.*

Mr. Edwards says "True virtue must chiefly consist in love to God, the Being of beings, infinitely the greatest and best of beings," and that "it may be asserted in general, that nothing is of the nature of true virtue, in which God is not the first and the last," etc. (pp. 125, 134.) And he thought this

* It may not be useless, perhaps, to observe here, that as being in general is the primary object of general benevolence, and benevolent being a secondary object, as has been observed; so there is a distinction to be made in the object of complacential love, into primary and secondary, in some measure analogous to that of benevolence. The primary object of complacence is that holiness and beauty which consist in pure benevolence, and a secondary object is the holy complacence itself. It must be evident, to any one who will attend, that this must be the case; for there must be complacence before there can be any delight in complacence, or complacential love of complacence; therefore the *first* complacence cannot have complacence or love of holiness for its object; but the *first* love of holiness must be the love of holy benevolence. And when this complacence in benevolence once exists, it does itself become an object of complacence, and in this sense is a secondary object of complacential love; it being a secondary beauty, implied in benevolence and flowing from it. And, indeed, the mind cannot have any true conception of the love of holiness, or holy complacential love, until it actually takes place in the mind, and therefore the *first* exercise of it in every mind cannot have the love of complacence for its object, but it must be the beauty of benevolence. The mind in this way getting an idea of the beauty of complacential love, immediately takes delight in it, or approves of it as an excellence, which is a secondary and consequential

was evident from what he had said upon the Nature of True Virtue, which he has particularly proved in his second chapter. Mr. Hart says, herein "he is very inconsistent with himself;" and that "there is indeed a strange confusion and inconsistence in this great man's ideas and reasonings upon this subject." (pp. 9, 11.)

But enough has been said to show how groundless this charge is, and that Mr. Edwards is perfectly consistent in this matter; and I trust that whoever will consider the subject with proper attention and candor will find it the only consistent notion of true virtue that has ever been proposed and that can be supported by Scripture. This, I hope, has been made evident in the preceding inquiry.

It may not be improper to take notice here of the objection Mr. H. makes against Mr. Edwards's speaking of any affection to God, under the name of *benevolence*. He presents us with an extract of a letter from one, who, he says, is "an ingenious gentleman;" in which Mr. Edwards is severely censured for using this word thus. He says this is "more than odd; it is quite improper, and sounds irreverent!"

Mr. Edwards has taken particular notice of this objection, and answered it. (pp. 126, 127.) Mr. Hart, or his friend, had no right to renew this very objection against Mr. Edwards, without taking notice of his answer, and showing wherein his reasoning fails, which neither of them have attempted.

I trust none will deny that any affection exercised towards God has the nature of good will to him; but if we are to exercise any good will towards God, and be in any degree his friends, we must so far exercise benevolence towards him, for good will and benevolence are two names of the same thing. And why, of these two names, which are used for precisely the same thing, one should be "improper and irreverent," when used to express this same affection towards God, and the other not, remains for this ingenious gentleman to show. Why this same affection may not be called by the same name, when exercised towards a superior, and one that is above all dependence on us, as well as when exercised towards an inferior and dependent, no man, I believe, can show. If benevolence implies indigence, and dependence in the object towards which it is exercised, it would indeed be improper and irreverent to call any affection exercised towards God by this name. And I conclude this gentleman, and all others who make this objection, have affixed this idea to the word benevolence; and that this is the ground of their

exercise of complacence towards this secondary object. The case seems to be plainly this. The first exercise of holiness is benevolence to being, as such; in which the heart is disposed to unite itself to being in general, in seeking the highest universal good. And this general benevolence implies in it benevolence to benevolent beings, and a disposition to love benevolence, with a love of complacence. And the benevolent mind, being thus pleased with benevolence as the greatest beauty and excellence, is of course in the next place pleased with this beautiful complacence in benevolence.

Of this holy love, in all its branches and exercises, God is in a true sense the first and supreme object, as he is the sum of all being; so that all created existence, in comparison with him, sinks into nothing. And he is the sum and fountain of all benevolent being, and of complacence in moral beauty, or of all excellence and moral beauty and perfection. And his existence and relations to his creatures, in which he is infinitely distinguished from all other beings, are the ground of peculiar exercises of the benevolent mind towards him; such as holy fear and reverence; a humble trust, and rest, and joy in him, as the supreme good, and a sweet acquiescence in him, and in his government and works, and resignation to him, etc., all which is implied in benevolence, even in its very nature, and is nothing but universal benevolence acting according to its nature towards this infinitely great and glorious object.

disgust. But in this they are very arbitrary, in affixing a meaning to the word which it does not express, nor was ever designed to signify.

Mr. H. allows that God is the first object of his own benevolence, p. 18. If God exercises benevolence towards himself, why may not his creatures? Yea, why must they not? In the exercise of holiness they imitate God as dear children, and are partakers of the divine nature. Their love to God, then, must be of the same nature with God's love of himself; and if his is a love of benevolence, theirs must be so too. And why God's love of himself may be called benevolence, which Mr. H. ventures to do, and yet the same kind of love of God in the creature may not be called so, is quite unaccountable.

Besides, Mr. H. makes all virtue summarily to consist in "giving up all inconsistent interests, as loss for God's sake, and his kingdom's." Now, what is this but benevolence or good will to God, and his interest and kingdom, in such a regard for his honor and interest, as to be willing to give up every thing for the sake of this? If this is not benevolence, of which God is the first and chief object, we may despair of ever knowing what is benevolence.

But Mr. H. is more express yet. He says, a "benevolent propensity of minds to minds is communicated to the hearts of men, by a sight and feeling sense of God's benevolence to them," in the exercise of which they attract to him in the first place. Surely Mr. H. falls under the "just" reproof of this "ingenious gentleman," if any one does.

SECTION II.

Mr. Hart's Objections against Mr. Edwards's Notion of the Secondary or Natural Beauty in Virtue considered and obviated.

Mr. Edwards observes there are two kinds of beauty. One is moral beauty, or the beauty of true virtue or holiness, which is the highest kind of beauty, and consists in cordial agreement and harmony, or general benevolence, and is discerned and approved of by such only who love true holiness, which love is itself the exercise of holiness. The other is natural beauty, which consists in natural harmony or agreement, and takes place in the natural and material world, in numberless instances. And this same kind of beauty is found in things immaterial and mental, as well as in other things, and there is a natural beauty in virtuous exercises of the mind, and the fruit of those exercises, which is entirely distinct from the moral, holy beauty, and of a different nature; even the same kind of beauty which is found in the material world. Thus there is a natural beauty, harmony, and agreement in a man's doing to others as he would think proper they should do to him, of the same kind with the beauty and harmony of a building, the different parts of which are harmoniously fitted to answer each other; which beauty is distinct from that general benevolence, in which the virtue of a man's doing to others as he would they should do to him consists, and which is the true moral beauty of the heart. This natural beauty is found in all virtuous exercises and conduct, especially in relative duties between man and man, according to their different stations and relations, which may be relished and delighted in by those who have no virtue, as a taste for this natural beauty is natural to all men, and does not imply disinterested benevolence, but is consistent with the highest degree of selfishness and sin. Therefore they have run into a great mistake who have thought this relish for natural beauty, which is found in virtuous conduct, which is common to all men, an evidence that all men have a degree of true virtue. (See Edwards's Nature of True Virtue, Chap. III. throughout.)

Mr. Hart objects against all this, as "very injurious and destructive to true virtue." And in order to expose it, he makes the following observations, (Chap. III.): —

"1. If this doctrine is true, God's revealed law no where commands, recommends, or once mentions that in which all true virtue primarily and most essentially consists, but only enjoins and commands it in regard to its secondary beauty."

Answer. The law of God requires universal goodness, or love, and nothing else; in which Mr. Edwards says all true virtue consists. This is sufficiently illustrated in the preceding inquiry, from which it appears this argument is very ill chosen indeed to be used against Mr. Edwards's notion of virtue, and is nothing but begging the question. Mr. H. says, "If I mistake not, Mr. Edwards does implicitly acknowledge this in what has been transcribed above." *Answer.* He is doubtless greatly mistaken, and must lie under this imputation till he has particularly shown where and how this is implied in what Mr. Edwards has said. Mr. H. goes on: —

"2. If this doctrine is true, it may be suspected that the holy men of old, prophets and apostles, never knew or practised true virtue."

Answer. Our Lord has told us that love to God and our neighbor is the whole of what the law and the prophets inculcated, even that same universal benevolence in which Mr. Edwards says all true virtue consists. We have, therefore, no more reason to suspect the prophets never knew or practised this virtue, than we have to suspect that Christ was not a teacher come from God. And one of the chief apostles said, "love is the fulfilling of the law," and that all true religion and holiness consists in this, and nothing else. (1 Cor. xiii. 2.) He is, therefore, so far from placing virtue in this secondary beauty, that he expressly places it in something else, even in universal love and benevolence.

The instances in Scripture Mr. H. brings to support this observation are not to his purpose. (Ps. xviii. 25, 26. Rev. xvi. 5, 6.) There is a true moral beauty in the righteousness of God here celebrated, which consists in universal benevolence. Take this from that conduct which is called righteousness in God or man, and no moral goodness remains; so nothing worthy of holy admiration and praise. There being a secondary beauty, a natural fitness, in justice, does not prove or suppose there is no higher beauty and excellence in it. If Mr. H. would prove the point he has set up here, he must produce an instance of virtue, recommended and celebrated as such, which has nothing in it of the nature of universal benevolence. In what he has yet said, he has only begged the question. He proceeds: —

"3. Let it be observed that there is no such object of God's attention and regard as being, simply considered."

Answer. There is such an object as being in general, or universal being, which is the same with being simply considered, as Mr. Edwards uses the terms. And universal benevolence has this for its object; and that is not virtuous love which will not extend to being in general, as such, or simply considered. This has been sufficiently explained and evinced by Mr. Edwards, and in the preceding Inquiry, pp. 16, 17.

Mr. Hart, to support his assertion, goes on to say, "God is his own first object. He sees himself as he is, as possessed of an absolute fulness of being, enriched and adorned with all possible mental perfections. *As such* he is the primary object of his *first* and chief love, both of benevolence and complacence.

On this passage I would observe, —

1. It is granted that "God is his own first object;" this Mr. Edwards grants, and has proved; and it has been shown, in the foregoing section, that this is consistent with virtue's consisting in love to being in general — not only as God is, in effect, being in general, but his love of himself is, in its nature, love to being as such, or being simply considered.

2. According to Mr. H.'s account of the matter here, God's love of benevolence and complacency is no part of his excellence and perfections. God is "enriched and adorned with *all possible* mental perfections," independent of his love; and as thus possessed of all possible perfections, "he is the primary object of his *first* love." This is a bold stroke, indeed! It strikes out all love of benevolence or complacence from being any part of holiness. The Scripture says, "God is love;" but, according to Mr. H., no part of his perfection is expressed in this, nor any thing worthy or excellent. And the law of God, which requires love, is no transcript or expression of the divine perfections, for these do not consist, in the least degree, in love, but in something entirely different from this. And if God's love to himself is no part of "all possible perfection," he having all possible perfection antecedent to this, then his love of benevolence and complacence towards his creatures is no part of his holiness and perfection; and it will also follow that love of benevolence and complacence in creatures, the angels for instance, is no part of their moral excellence. Thus we see where Mr. H. is carried in his opposition to Mr. Edwards's account of true virtue. This was no inadvertence in Mr. H. No one can do better than he has done on this head, if he sets up to oppose general benevolence to being, as such, as the foundation and sum of all holiness: it will necessarily land him in this first-born of absurdities, and he can give no better account of the divine holiness and perfections than Mr. H. has here given. Mr. H. has the same sentiment in the following extraordinary sentence: "He [God] is not virtuous and holy because he loves himself, but he loves himself because he is holy." That is, God's holiness does not consist in love, but something which is antecedent to all love, and the ground and object of it, and is, therefore, quite a distinct thing from love.

Mr. H. may be asked what this holiness is, and wherein it consists — what are "all possible mental perfections," in which there is no degree, no kind of love? Doubtless he will be as much puzzled for an answer as the Indian he mentions, who asserted the earth stood on a tortoise, and, being asked what the tortoise stood upon, "he cried out, with surprise, 'Me don't know!'"

Perhaps Mr. H. thinks he has answered this question in his chapter Of the Essential Nature of True Virtue; but, if I can understand him there, what he says of the divine holiness and perfection is in direct opposition to this extraordinary assertion, and very consistent with Mr. Edwards. He represents God's holiness as consisting in an equitable regard to himself and his creatures. This may be benevolence to being in general, notwithstanding any thing he says; yea, I think it must be this, according to his own account of the matter, when all he says upon it is put together. He speaks of "an established virtuousness of character" in the creature as conformity to God himself; and he says this consists in love, and that it is, in effect, universal love. Now what can universal love be but love to being in general? And if this is virtue in the creature, by which he is conformed to God's moral character, then God's holiness consists in this same universal love, or love to being in general. But, be this as it may, it is certain Mr. H. makes the holiness of God to consist in part, if not wholly, in *love*. What can God's equitable regard to himself be but love to himself? Let him tell who can.

Moreover, he speaks of the love and goodness of God as a "most virtuous" or holy propensity, and as that which is his glory. Now, if God's love, his benevolence and goodness, are his holiness and his glory, how can it be that he is "enriched and adorned with all possible mental perfections" antecedent to his love to himself, and as the ground of it, and antecedent to his love to his creatures? This love cannot be any part of his perfection, holiness, and glory, if he is "adorned with all possible perfections" antecedent to it. Thus we see Mr. Hart has been so far from telling us what all possible

perfection is, considered as aside from love, and the ground and object of it, that he has contradicted this his position, and placed the moral perfection and holiness of God in love, and nothing else. "Error is fated to run crooked."

Mr. H. proceeds to say, —

"4. Let us next consider the destructive influence of this notion of virtue upon virtue itself. All relative duties which we owe to God, to Jesus Christ, and our fellow-servants, partake of the nature of justice. They are equitable, fit, and right in their own nature. They have a natural agreement and harmonious proportionableness to the nature and characters of their respective objects. All this you see and approve; and the dispositions and exercises of your mind or heart towards all these relative duties are natural, harmoniously proportionable to them, and in concord with them, equitably suited to them. Your heart, then, is very beautiful, but not at all virtuous, if these harmonious and equitable dispositions and exercises of your mind do not arise from pure benevolence to being, simply considered. So, then, the beauty of your mind, as adorned with all these relative, equitable, and harmonious dispositions *only*, is of the same sort with that of bodies. Your heart is as beautiful as a square or a cube, and no more virtuous than they."

On this the following things may be observed: —

1. There is, in things of a moral nature, a natural beauty, which consists in harmony and agreement, which is distinct from any thing properly moral in them, and, therefore, a beauty which is distinct from moral beauty, and of a different nature. This Mr. Edwards has asserted, illustrated, and proved; and I do not find that Mr. Hart has so much as attempted to show wherein his proof fails, and how what he says is not to the purpose. All Mr. H. attempts to do is to draw absurd consequences from this notion of secondary natural beauty in moral things, — which consists in begging the question, or assertions without any manner of proof, some of which have been considered, — or in misrepresenting Mr. Edwards's doctrine on this head, of which the words before us are an instance, as I shall show before I have done.

There is a uniformity and proportion, and an answerableness of one thing to another, in moral things, or true virtue, which is of the same kind with the uniformity which takes place in the material world; and the same taste which discerns and takes pleasure in the latter will do the same with respect to the former; and, therefore, this taste and pleasure does not imply love of virtue, for it is not the virtue itself that is discerned and relished; and if there was nothing there but what is discerned and relished by this taste, there would be no virtue in it. This is what Mr. Edwards has asserted, and Mr. Hart has said nothing to prove it is not so, nor will he ever do it, it is presumed. It is a truth which every considerate, judicious person must discern, Mr. H. himself not excepted, for *he* has acknowledged it, as I shall show presently.

A person wholly selfish may be pleased with some things which attend general benevolence; there is to him a beauty in it, so far as he has advantage by it. This may be while he sees nothing of the true beauty of benevolence. Saul, under the influence of selfishness, saw a beauty in David's conduct in sparing his life when he was in his hands, and was highly delighted with it, while he wholly overlooked the true beauty of it, and the virtue he exercised, and had no pleasure in it, but would have been displeased with the same conduct in David, had it been towards one of Saul's enemies. It is granted that, in this case, the beauty seen, and Saul's pleasure in David's conduct, are not wholly of the same kind with that under consideration, as the former has its foundation chiefly in selfishness, the latter not; yet I think it serves to illustrate the case before us, and show that men may see a beauty in virtuous conduct, and be pleased with it, and yet not see

the true beauty of virtue, or have any regard to the true virtue which is exercised, but be disposed to be displeased with that, and hate it.

The just proportion and symmetry of a beautiful picture is adjusted and marked out by a number of exactly proportioned lines, drawn so as, in a certain manner, to agree with each other, and form a proper uniformity. Now these lines, thus exactly drawn and proportioned, form a beauty different from that which we call the beauty of a picture, or a human face, which consists in a certain symmetry and just proportion. An accurate mathematician, who has no taste or discerning of what is meant by the beauty of a picture, which is formed by certain colors and shades proportioned to these lines, yet might discern the just proportion of these lines, exactly drawn to suit and answer each other, see a beauty in it, and be pleased. Here we see there are two distinct beauties, the one inferior, the other higher, the latter the true beauty of a picture; and yet the former is discerned, and not the latter. And why may it not be so in the case before us, though the beauties, one of an inferior, the other of a higher kind, have a different and greater distinction than in this instance? The exact proportion and harmony in the vibrations of the chords of a musical instrument have a beauty in them that would give pleasure, if clearly discerned, distinct from the harmony of a tune; and he who has no taste for music might discern the harmony and exact proportion of these vibrations, and be pleased with this beauty.

Mr. H. insists upon it that what Mr. Edwards calls the secondary beauty that attends true virtue, and says is the same kind with natural beauty, is true virtue, and all the beauty there is in it. This seems to be at the bottom of all he has said against Mr. Edwards on this head. He might, so far as I can see, with just as much reason say, all the beauty of a beautiful picture consists in the exact proportion of a number of lines; or that the whole of the beauty and sweet harmony of music consists in the exact, harmonious, correspondent vibrations of the air, or of the chords of a musical instrument. He says, "The truth is, this marvellous scheme has changed the natural, moral beauty and glory of true virtue into an image made like to the beauty of an equilateral triangle, or a chessboard."

That he had no reason to bring this charge against Mr. Edwards, any one must see at first glance. Mr. Edwards says virtue does not consist in this secondary beauty, but in something else of quite a different nature and kind; that though there is a beauty which consists in proportion, and the answerableness of one thing with another that attends true virtue, which is of the same kind with the proportion and beauty of a triangle or chessboard, yet this is of a nature entirely different from virtue, and has nothing of its beauty and glory. What more could Mr. Edwards have done utterly to exclude the beauty of a chessboard from the beauty and glory of true virtue? This was the design of this chapter on secondary beauty. But may not this charge, with great justice and propriety, be retorted on Mr. Hart himself? He insists upon it, that this secondary beauty, which Mr. Edwards has proved to be like to the beauty of material things, (and Mr. H. has not shown that it is not so,) is all the beauty and glory there is in true virtue. This charge must lie upon him till he can prove the beauty attending true virtue, which Mr. Edwards calls natural, secondary beauty, is not a beauty of the same kind with the beauty in material things. This leads me to another observation.

2. There is a misrepresentation in this passage. Mr. H. here supposes that all relative duties to God, to Jesus Christ, etc., may be practised from the heart, according to Mr. Edwards, without the exercise of true virtue; "and the dispositions and exercises of the mind or heart towards all the objects of these relative duties be natural, harmoniously proportionable to them, and in concord with them, equitably suited to them," and the heart be thus "very beautiful, but not at all virtuous." This is a gross misrepresentation. Mr. Edwards speaks of this secondary beauty as the attendant of

true virtue, which does not take place in the mind that is destitute of virtue. He allows of no dispositions and exercises of heart, harmoniously proportionable and equitably suitable to the objects of relative duties, in the mind destitute of true virtue or general benevolence, and which are not the exercises of that. And in this misrepresentation Mr. H. really begs the question in dispute, or takes for granted what he had to prove, viz., that a man may heartily practise all relative duties towards God and his neighbor, while he has no universal benevolence. If he had proved this, which he has taken for granted, and Mr. Edwards had allowed what he supposes, viz., that the mind may have all the beauty which he supposes in relative duties, without any true virtue, "the destructive influence of his notion of virtue upon virtue itself" might have appeared. But as the case stands, nothing of this kind is made to appear.

Mr. H. goes into the same way of arguing (if it can be called arguing) in another passage which I will transcribe. After having made a quotation from Mr. Edwards, in which he supposes what he had abundantly proved, viz., that there is a natural beauty accompanying true virtue, in which true virtue does not consist, but is of the same kind with the natural beauty in material things, he cries out, "Wonderful!" and then goes on in the following words: "Here an appeal is made to experience, and the argument is built on this supposition, that moral proportion and harmony is a beauty of the same kind with that of material things." Here is a misrepresentation. Mr. Edwards does not assert this of "moral proportion and harmony," but says that, besides the moral proportion and harmony in true virtue, there is also a natural proportion and harmony, which is the attendant of true virtue, in which there is a natural beauty of the same kind with that of material things. And Mr. H. has said nothing to disprove it, that I can find. And surely Mr. Edwards had a right to build an argument on a premise which he thought he had fully proved, and which, it seems, Mr. H. did not think best directly and expressly to attempt to disprove, or so much as deny. But Mr. H. goes on: "It is not possible to conceive of any thing more absurd. I desire any one to take a human mind, adorned with all right, relative affections and exercises to Jesus Christ, harmoniously agreeable and beautifully proportioned to his characters and relations to us, (only excluding benevolence to being simply considered, and let the faith of him be their spring,) and carefully compare it with a square, a cube, and a beautiful piece of embroidery, and try if he can discover any such likeness in their beauties as to lead him to pronounce them beauties of the very same sort or order. He will as soon discover the actions of a spirit to be of the same kind with the action or motions of a clock."

Here Mr. H. supposes what is impossible, viz., that "a mind may be adorned with all right, relative affections and exercises to Jesus Christ," when benevolence to being in general is excluded, and that a man is a true believer in Christ while wholly without this benevolence. He has attempted to form a character here that never existed, and never will, because it implies a contradiction. Therefore, there is no such character to be considered. Mr. H. here introduces the beauties of true virtue, and then asks if there is any likeness between these and the beauty of a square, etc. Mr. Edwards does not say these are beauties of the same sort. What he says is, that over and above the true virtuous beauty in these relative duties, there is also a beauty of another kind, which itself is not virtue, but only the attendant of it, and is of the same kind with the beauty in material things, and may be perceived and delighted in by one who has no virtue, nor any relish for it. Now, Mr. H. has not offered the least evidence that this is not so, in this passage; nor has he said any thing really in opposition to Mr. Edwards.*

* Mr. Edwards allows there is a natural beauty in the practice of justice and other virtues, in external conduct. And when these are the expression of the

But I proceed to observe, —

3. Mr. H., after all he has said to the contrary, allows the very thing he here opposes; so opposes himself only, while he thinks he is opposing Mr. Edwards. He says, men who are destitute of true virtue, "are many times determined to do particular equitable actions to others from a regard to the equity of the case, as their true spring, and for equity's sake," etc.; that a man in dealing with his neighbor may "see what is right between them, and, from a regard to the equity of the case, deal justly with him." Here he allows that equitable conduct in relative duty may be approved and practised, and yet there be no virtue in it. I would ask Mr. H. whether there is not a sort of beauty in this justice and equitable conduct, in which there is no virtue? He must answer in the affirmative; for what he says implies it, as he supposes it is practised from a regard to the justice and equity of the case, and for equity's sake. The next question is, whether this beauty is the beauty of true virtue, or a beauty of another kind. This he has also answered. It cannot be the beauty of true virtue; for he expressly says there is no true virtue in it. And if there is a beauty in one instance of equitable conduct which is of a different kind from the true beauty of virtue, this may be the case, yea, certainly must be, in all instances. And this is a secondary beauty, which consists in a natural harmony and agreement of one thing with another; the very same beauty which is found in material things. Thus Mr. Hart allows all that Mr. Edwards has asserted concerning secondary beauty, and expressly asserts at the latter end of his book what he greatly condemns in Mr. Edwards towards the beginning: "Error is fated to run crooked; the greatest men cannot govern and keep it straight."

Mr. Edwards having observed that it was evident, from what he had said, that the "disposition or sense of the mind which consists in a determination of mind to approve and be pleased with this (secondary) beauty, considered simply, and by itself, has nothing of the nature of true virtue, and is entirely a different thing from a truly virtuous taste," there being no more virtue in it than there is in "a disposition to approve the harmony of good music," etc., Mr. H. makes the following observation upon it: "If this good man had attended to one obvious distinction, he might have saved himself from falling into this grand absurdity, viz., the difference there is in the nature of things, between the mind's seeing and approving the harmonious proportion and justness of virtuous dispositions and exercises of heart towards God and our neighbor, and having such dispositions and exercises himself. A man may see and approve the beauty and excellence of true virtue in some degree, and yet his heart not be in this beautifully harmonious and equitable temper and state."

Ans. 1. "This good man" has attended to this distinction, and thought he had demonstrated the "grand absurdity" and impossibility of what is supposed in it, in the following words: "It is impossible that any one should truly relish this beauty, consisting in general benevolence, who has not that temper himself. I have observed, that if any being is possessed of such a temper, he will unavoidably be pleased with the same temper in another. And it may be in like manner demonstrated, that it is such a spirit, and nothing else, that will relish such a spirit. For if a being, destitute of benevolence, should love benevolence to being in general, it would prize and seek that which it had no value for. Because, to love an inclination to the good of being in general, would imply a loving and prizing the good of being in general. For how should one love and value a disposition to a thing, or a tendency to promote a thing, and for that very reason, because it tends to promote it, when the thing itself is what he is regardless of, and has no value for, nor desires to have it promoted."

heart, there is a moral beauty in the exercises of that, the beauty of holiness. But when there is no true virtue in the heart, there is no natural beauty in the exercises of the mind; all the natural beauty is in the external conduct.

Had Mr. H. well attended to this passage, and determined to say nothing contrary to it till he could answer it, "he might have saved himself from falling into the grand absurdity" contained in the words just quoted from him. For, —

Ans. 2. Nothing can be more absurd, and imply a greater contradiction, than that which Mr. H. here affirms, viz., that the heart which is in no degree virtuous, does at the same time approve of virtue, and that there is a difference in the nature of things between these. Heartily to approve of virtue for its own sake, is to be at heart a friend to virtue, and to love holiness for holiness' sake. And can this take place in an unholy heart — a heart that is an enemy to all virtue? It is impossible. It is even a self-evident proposition, that the love of holiness is holiness, and therefore has passed for an incontestable truth, till Mr. H. has risen and contradicted it. He says, "A man may see and approve the beauty and excellence of virtue, in some degree, and yet his heart not be in this beautifully harmonious and equitable temper and state." But why does he limit this to some degree? Why may he not approve of the beauty and excellence of virtue in every degree, as well as in some degree? It is impossible for him or any one else to tell, unless it be because his heart is in some degree a friend to virtue, i. e., really virtuous; but not so in every degree. All Mr. H.'s proof of this extraordinary assertion is in the following words: "Nothing is more common, and nothing more to be lamented, than this monstrous inconsistence between the moral sense or taste of the mind, and the ruling dispositions and exercises of the heart of man." Here is an appeal made to experience; but the whole evidence of the thing to be proved lies in Mr. H.'s confident assertion. I may say, in my turn, if Mr. H. had attended to one obvious distinction, he might have saved himself from falling into this grand absurdity, viz., the difference there is in the nature of things, between the dictates of the judgment and conscience, and the relish and approbation of the heart. An inconsistence between these is indeed very common; men often love and practise that with their whole hearts which their reason and judgment declare to be wrong and hateful; and their conscience pronounces that to be beautiful and excellent which their hearts do not in any degree approve, but utterly detest and hate. Here is an inconsistence between the judgment and the heart, which is consistent with the nature of things, and evident from abundant experience. But for the heart to approve of that which at the same time it hates and wholly rejects, is indeed a monstrous inconsistence. It implies the most palpable contradiction, and therefore never did take place, nor ever will, in any one instance. To see beauty, and heartily approve of it, as such, or to taste and relish the beauty of holiness, as such, is the same with the love of holiness, as such, or for its own sake. And when Mr. H. will prove that the heart of man may be thus friendly to holiness, and love it for its own sake, while destitute of all true virtue, he will show that he has not fallen into the grand absurdity with which he is charged.

Mr. H. says, that, according to Mr. E., "the nature and character, or perfections of God, are no cause or ground of the first existence of a virtuous or holy principle in the hearts of created, intelligent beings;" and adds, "I should be glad to know how the general attraction or propensity of mind to being comes into existence."

Answer. It comes into existence by the omnipotent energy of God. It is his workmanship, by which men are created in Christ Jesus unto good works, who first created man in his own image. (Gen. i. 27. Eph. iv. 24.) God gives them a new heart, a heart to know him, etc. (Jer. xxiv. 7. Eze. xxxvi. 26.) Giving a heart to know God must be a work of power, in order to their knowing him, and therefore cannot be effected by the knowledge of him, or a true sight of the perfections of God. A sight and knowledge of the divine perfections cannot be the cause or ground of that which is done in

order to this knowledge taking place, or in giving a heart thus to know God. It is the new heart, the circumcised, benevolent heart, and not the old, uncircumcised, selfish heart that sees the divine character and loves it. It is granted the heart would not see and love, were there nothing to be seen and loved; and in this sense the character seen and loved is the ground and cause, *sine qua non;* as without this there would be no object of love. But the efficient cause, ground, and foundation of all is the divine power and energy, circumcising the heart to know and love — giving a new heart, or the Spirit of God taking possession of the heart as a powerful principle of benevolence. And in this way, even by the immediate exertion of divine, new-creating power, the heart becomes benevolent.

Mr. H.'s representation supposes divine power and energy to be the cause of all virtue in the creature, and that it owes its first existence to this; and so has really answered the question which he puts. He supposes "a realizing belief" of the divine character and love — by which God's excellence and love is "perceived, realized, and *felt*, as extended to them" — is given to them by God; or that it is God who "gives them to feel in themselves his attracting love," and that this is the cause, ground, and reason why one sees, realizes, and feels this excellence and love of God rather than another, and why he does it now rather than before. This realizing belief, sensibility, and feeling is given by God, in taking away the heart of stone, which would not realize and feel this excellence and love, and giving a new heart — a heart of flesh. This, then, is the cause, ground, and source of the first existence of all true virtue, and must be so, according to Mr. H. And I conclude Mr. H. will not say this divine operation, by which it is given to men to see and feel God's excellence and love, is by the truth seen, because this would be to make the effect the means and cause of itself, and to suppose God works by that which is the fruit and consequence of his own operation. Surely, that which God does, in order to make men see and feel, is not done *by* their seeing and feeling, or by the things seen and felt, but by an immediate operation. If Mr. H. will not grant this, he will find himself in the case of his before-mentioned Indian.

Mr. H. says, "This doctrine of Mr. Edwards seems to be the foundation on which several doctrines in the *new* scheme of divinity are built. These in particular, viz.: that the moral perfections and character of God as revealed by the gospel, and seen by natural men under the teaching of the word and spirit of Jesus Christ so far as they are capable of seeing them, can have no possible influence in changing their hearts. Regeneration consists in giving, or planting in the heart, a new spiritual taste or relish. This change is not wrought by the instrumentality of light, or by any means whatsoever. The Word of God is not a means in the hand of the Spirit in working this change, but it is effected by mere absolute and properly creating power."

Mr. Hart has not mentioned these doctrines exactly in the words of those to whom he imputes them; and when they have used any of these words they have explained them, and guarded against a wrong sense, which the reader will be in danger of putting upon them as they are here used by Mr. H. The sum of the doctrines that have been advanced on this head, so far as I can learn, is this, viz.: that the human heart is naturally so wholly corrupt, so blind and opposite to the beauty and excellence of divine truth and holiness, that, in order to its seeing and relishing this, a divine power must be exerted on the heart, of which divine power and operation this sight and relish of truth is the effect. The divine operation in this case is as much antecedent to this sight and taste as the opening the eyes is antecedent to seeing, and as much the effect and consequence of this work as seeing is the effect and consequence of having the eyes opened. Therefore, light, or the truth seen, is not any means of that powerful operation which is antecedent to seeing the truth, and does produce this sight as the cause of it, for, by the

supposition, it is the effect, and not the cause; and divine truth seen and relished is really that in which the active change consists which is the effect of the divine power.

Mr. H. grants this is all true, if Mr. Edwards's notion of true virtue is right; so that, according to him, — and I suppose it is the truth of the case, — the dispute is, at bottom, about the nature of true holiness, which is the same with the nature of God's moral character. If this is rightly stated, in the preceding Inquiry, what Mr. H. calls "the new scheme of divinity" is as old as the Bible, and the only scriptural one; if not, his opposition may, perhaps, be justified.

SECTION III.

Mr. Hart's Objections against Mr. Edwards's Account of Natural Conscience and Moral Sense considered and answered.

Mr. Hart's objections against Mr. Edwards's description of natural conscience and moral sense are grounded on his excluding from it all relish and approbation of heart, of the beauty and excellence of virtue, and all true sense and discerning of that in which it consists. He has formed his observations upon this under *five* particulars, but the whole of the objections he makes against it may be reduced to the three following: —

I. If natural conscience does not see and relish true virtue, or that very beauty and excellence in which it is distinguished from every thing else, then the dictates of conscience, and the sense of desert which is implied in it, are without foundation, and wrong, and it "unavoidably deceives us; for moral desert is necessarily connected with, and has a natural and direct relation to, this quality in moral actions wherein their virtuousness or viciousness consists, and to nothing else. But, according to Mr. Edwards, natural conscience has no perception or sense of that quality in moral actions wherein their virtuousness essentially consists, but, as a wrong-headed thing, places it in that wherein it does not at all consist, and so connects the sense of desert wrong, and contrary to the true nature of things."

Answer. There is, in natural conscience, the exercise of reason and judgment, which may be right and agreeable to the truth, independent of the exercises of the heart, and in direct opposition to them. Reason and judgment may pronounce a thing right, morally good, and excellent, while to the relish and inclination of the heart it is utterly incligible and displeasing. In this case conscience is not a wrong-headed thing, but dictates the truth. Reason and judgment being rightly informed, and free from speculative error, are so far from deceiving us, that, by the supposition, they dictate nothing but the truth, and place virtue and vice and moral desert in that in which they truly consist. There is so much evidence of this from fact and experience, that I suppose it needless to attempt to make it more evident by reasoning upon it.

It will be said this does not remove the difficulty, for these dictates of reason suppose an idea of the thing of which it judges, and that it is seen in a true light. How can the mind judge of that of which it has no true sight or conception? It judges of what it sees, and not of that which it does not see.

Answer. The reason and judgment may be convinced of the beauty, excellence, and worthiness of an object, of which beauty and excellence the mind has not the least taste and relish; and in this sense there is no idea or sight of the beauty and excellence of the object. This is certain from fact and experience, as has been just observed; and this is all that is affirmed in the case before us, and, therefore, the thing that is objected against;

consequently, the objection must be groundless. The taste and sense of the natural beauty which there is in true virtue, and a desire to be self-consistent, and opposition to the contrary, — both which Mr. Edwards observes come into natural conscience and the moral sense, — may be necessary to give an idea and sense of any thing moral, and of moral desert, and yet the judgment and conscience place true virtue and moral desert in that in which it really consists. Reason may dictate that the beauty which the mind discerns and relishes is not the true beauty of virtue, — but this is something of a more noble kind, consisting in union of heart to heart, in universal benevolence, and that all moral desert lies in this and its contrary, — I say reason and conscience may dictate all this without any actual idea, or real perception, of that sweet beauty and excellence there is in virtue, or the least degree of relish of it, and will do so, if all speculative error is removed. Thus natural conscience, when duly enlightened, will approve of true virtue, and nothing else, as really excellent and praiseworthy; and if a man does not judge right in this case, but is deceived, and judges that true virtue consists in that natural agreement and secondary beauty which he sees and relishes, it is his own fault, and an abuse of his reason through the prejudices and corruption of his heart. Mr. H. says, according to Mr. Edwards's notion of virtue, "natural conscience is wholly ignorant of it, and uninterested in it;" but herein he is greatly mistaken. The reason and judgment may be fully convinced that true virtue consists in benevolence, while the heart is wholly opposed to it, and the moral taste has no relish for it, no sense of its sweetness, beauty, and excellence. So a man's conscience may be convinced that he is wholly without all true virtue, and all proper idea and sense of it, and that he is wholly to blame for not exercising this virtue.

A man who never felt in his heart the least degree of love to God, or had any delight in worshipping him, but the greatest aversion to it, and is always most uneasy when obliged to be present where he is worshipped, — but has the highest relish for gaming, drinking, and profaneness, and places all his happiness in these, — such a man may be convinced in his conscience that there is such a thing as true, supreme love to God, and that there is the highest and most refined pleasure in this, and in worshipping and serving God with such love, — that he is under all imaginable obligations to love God, and delight in him and his service, so that it is wholly his fault that he does not, — and yet go on in his old way, with as strong an inclination as ever. In this case, the man, by the supposition, has no true idea of that about which he reasons right, but is wholly ignorant of the beauty and excellence of God, and has not the least taste and relish of the pleasure in worshipping him with true devotion. He has, indeed, speculative ideas of these, — i. e., all the ideas that speculation, by the help of all the sensations he has, will give, or is capable of, — while his heart is wholly without any taste and relish for moral excellence. In this instance, — and there are many such, — his conscience does not deceive him, but judges right; and his reason condemns what his heart relishes and approves, and pronounces that right, excellent, and happy, of which he has not the least taste or relish, and so no true idea, of the beauty, excellence, and happiness of what his conscience approves, or his reason judges to be right and excellent.

The man who has no disinterested benevolence may have a speculative idea of it, — i. e., all the idea that there is or can be in mere speculation, and all that is necessary in order to *reason* about it, — but can have nothing of that idea which comes by taste and relish of the thing, and implies a sight and sense of its true beauty and excellence. All the blindness and ignorance there is in this case lies wholly in the want of such a taste and relish, and in an inclination to that which is opposite to it. The natural moral taste, which does not reach to true virtue, or imply the least relish for it, but is consistent with the greatest disrelish of it, is necessary in order to the mind's forming

an idea of any thing moral, and, therefore, is implied in natural conscience and sense of moral desert, but is entirely a different thing from a relish of true virtue, or an idea of its true beauty and excellence.

Mr. H. observes that Mr. Edwards says, "Natural conscience will approve of true virtue without seeing the true beauty of it;" and upon it has the following words: "Approve of that which you have no idea of, no relish for! Is not this a contradiction?"

Answer. No; by no means. What has been said, I hope, is a sufficient answer to this question. The approbation of conscience in this case is entirely a distinct thing from any relish and approbation of heart. By approbation of conscience here is meant conviction of conscience, or the reason and judgment dictating that true virtue is right, excellent, and most beautiful, which is a distinct thing from relishing or seeing the beauty.

II. Mr. H. objects that, "from Mr. Edwards's doctrines it does necessarily follow that men are under no natural obligation to be virtuous, and cannot equitably be required to be so."

The sum of what he says in support of this is, "Natural conscience and the moral sense cannot taste and approve this kind of virtue, any more than the white of an egg; and natural reason and common sense say there is no worth in it, nor any use or occasion for it in the moral world. Nothing but this preternatural principle itself (i. e., a truly virtuous taste, or a benevolent mind) can taste the sweetness of this primary beauty, or perceive any moral excellence in this sort of virtue. It lies far beyond the sphere of natural conscience and the moral taste. It is no object to them; consequently man is, by the constitution of his nature, as incapable of seeing or tasting this primary beauty of moral things as beasts are of relishing their secondary beauty. He is no more made for the one than they are for the other, and is no more obliged to relish the one than they are to relish the other; and cannot equitably be required to do so, till a new faculty or taste is given him, adapted to this object, by a new creating act of power."

Ans. I. When Mr. H. says natural conscience cannot approve of this kind of virtue, if by *approve* he means conviction of conscience, that this is true virtue, and that there is a beauty and excellence in it, while the heart disapproves and rejects it, his assertion is not true, as has been proved. If by *approve* he means a relish and approbation of heart, it is granted, and has been proved that no man, who has nothing of the nature of true virtue, can thus approve of it.

When he says "natural reason and common sense say there is no worth in it," (i. e., virtue which consists in benevolence to being in general,) "nor any use or occasion for it in the moral world," he only begs the question, and asserts what is most contrary to known fact. There are multitudes, the dictates of whose reason and common sense are, that all true worth and excellence consist in this, and that this is the life, excellence, and happiness of the moral world. And this is the universal dictate of natural reason and common sense, when properly enlightened and impartial.

And his assertion, in which all the seeming force of his argument lies, is wholly without foundation, viz., that man is, by the constitution of his nature, as incapable of seeing or tasting this primary beauty of moral things as the beasts are of relishing their secondary beauty. Man is, by the constitution of his nature, as capable of seeing and tasting this beauty as he is of exercising virtue; for this is one and the same thing. Man has all the natural faculties which are necessary in order to his being virtuous; and therefore, by the constitution of his nature, is capable of seeing and tasting the beauty of moral things, and of being perfectly holy. He wants nothing but an inclination to this, a heart to improve the faculties he has, in order to see and taste this beauty, and be truly virtuous. In short, he is furnished with every thing needful in order to see and exercise virtue, except it be virtue itself.

This he has not, but has every thing else which a creature can have, and not be actually virtuous. And if the want of a virtuous disposition, or a heart to discern and exercise virtue, and a strong and fixed opposite inclination, take off all obligation to virtue, then it is not possible that any man should be under any obligation to exercise more virtue than he actually has and does exercise; and consequently there is no such thing as sin and blame, or ill desert, in nature.

But Mr. H. says, "This is no more than saying, If they had this new kind of relish, they would have it; and if they had it, they might easily exercise it. But what is this to the purpose, when at the same time they confess there is no natural faculty in human nature, by any possible application of truth to which this taste can be raised up in the heart? On these principles, we might with as much reason and as good a grace say, The inability a blind man is under to see and relish the beauty of light is of the moral kind; and solemnly impute it to him as sin."

Answer. This is saying that this new kind of relish depends on the will or heart, and consists in the disposition and exercise of that; that so long as the disposition and choice of the heart is wrong, and in opposition to virtue, it has no relish for it; but when the mind is disposed and inclined to virtue, it has this taste and relish; for they are one and the same thing. Therefore, all the defect lies in the heart being indisposed to love and choose that which is in itself most excellent, and to which it is invited by the strongest reasons and motives.

If Mr. H.'s servant should utterly refuse to live in his house, or obey him in any one thing, and declare that he saw nothing agreeable in his house, or any of his ways, but he took his whole delight in gaming, drinking, and debauchery, and was determined to spend the rest of his life in these; his master would doubtless tell him that he had a very false and bad taste indeed, that he was very capable of knowing and doing better, and it was wholly owing to the viciousness of his heart that he could take no delight in his house and service, and had become such a disobedient servant, etc., and solemnly impute it to him as his sin. If the servant should say, "This is no more than saying, If I had a relish for your service and your ways, I should have it, and if I had it I could easily exercise it, and should then be willing to stay with you; but as I have not this taste and turn of mind, but the contrary, you have no reason to blame me in the least, or think me under any obligation to love or obey you;" his master would doubtless think he argued very weakly. And if Mr. H., by all experiments in his power, should find nothing in him, "by any possible application of truth to which" he could raise up in his heart the least degree of taste and relish for the beauty and order of his house, or any inclination to live with him, but a fixed abhorrence of his service and all his ways, would this excuse his servant in his eyes? No. If he did not divest himself of all reason and common sense, the farther he found his servant from all taste and relish for the business and enjoyment of his house, and the more impossible, by any applications to his mind, to raise in his heart such a taste, or eradicate the contrary, the more would he blame and impute sin to him.

Ans. 2. We do, indeed, "confess there is no natural faculty in human nature, by any possible application of truth to which this taste can be raised up in the heart," so long as the will remains wholly perverse, and opposes all such applications; and every one must confess this who will not hold the most palpable absurdity. But this does not suppose any want of natural faculties, or any natural defect in them; all the defect lies in the inclination or will: it is the perverse, obstinate resistance of that, to the applications made, which prevents their efficacy; therefore the person is wholly blamable for not having this taste, if a perverse inclination is in any case blamable. This is illustrated in the instance of the servant above.

Ans. 3. Mr. H. himself allows the same thing which he is here condemning. He says wicked men, or vicious minds, have no virtuous taste, — this being a distinct thing, and essentially different from any thing which they have, — and that their hearts are in opposition to it; and then goes on to say, "There is no cure for this evil disease of the heart but by the grace and truths of the gospel, as strongly impressed upon the mind by the spirit of Christ. If the perverseness and obstinacy of wicked minds prevail to that degree, under the enlightening influences and strivings of the Spirit of truth and grace, as to provoke the Lord to withdraw his gracious influences, and give them wholly up to their own hearts' lusts, their perverseness becomes *absolutely incurable*, and they go into perdition."

According to this, men are as far from a virtuous taste as Mr. Edwards supposes they are, and they cannot be recovered to this by any thing but the spirit of Christ; and yet he holds they are under obligations to be virtuous, and to have this virtuous taste, even while they are under the power of this "incurable disease," — incurable by any powers in themselves, or by any application, unless by the spirit of Christ, and even incurable by him, "absolutely incurable," if perversely and obstinately resisted by them. Let Mr. H. vindicate his own positions here, and he will answer all his objections against President Edwards and his disciples on this head.

Mr. H., in his letter to Dr. Whitaker, allows that "men must have these things presented to their view by God's teaching, before they can perceive their moral excellence." Mr. H. may be asked, Why, then, are they under obligations to see this moral excellence, and relish it, antecedent to God's teachings, or the impressions of the spirit of Christ? What if the spirit does not strongly impress these things on the mind, and they have not God's teachings, will this leave them under no obligations to see and relish these things, and wholly blameless in their "incurable disease"? It *must*, if what Mr. H. says on this head against Mr. Edwards has any reason and weight. And why is their perverseness blamable from whom the Spirit of God withdraws himself? Why are they sent to perdition, since their disease always was incurable by themselves, and they are as far from a virtuous taste as a blind man is from seeing the light, and it is become absolutely incurable now? As well may you condemn a blind man for not seeing and relishing the light of the sun, Mr. H. being judge.*

* I said above, Mr. Hart holds that men who have no virtue, or virtuous taste, are under obligations to be virtuous, because this is supposed in his objection against Mr. Edwards, which we are considering, and is implied in all he says upon it. But I think he has said what is inconsistent with this, and a sufficient ground to conclude he does not hold that unregenerate men are under obligations to be holy. I have reference to what he says, when it was urged against him that the representation given in his words just quoted, which he had before given in substance in his dialogues, was as inconsistent with man's obligations to be holy, etc., as the doctrines he objected against. They are the following words: "The gospel is a ministration of supernatural truth and grace, fitted in its nature to work in the mind as a vital seed and sacred leaven; and the mind of man is naturally capable of being influenced and changed or spiritualized by it, when firmly believed and realized. The Holy Spirit of God accompanies this ministration of the word of life with some degree of his influence, as a common grace. If sinners improve this, and the outward helps they have by the gospel, *as far as they are improvable by them*, I believe he will crown his common influence with special and effectual, leading them on to saving faith, and so regenerate them. If they do not, but continually resist and rebel against the motions of the Spirit, and so provoke God to withdraw his Spirit, and give them up to final blindness and hardness of heart, the grace of

But, as Mr. H. has undertaken to show particularly what inability does not excuse, we will attend to that, and see if he has given any better account of the matter than they do whom he thinks he opposes. He says, "That kind of moral inability which does not excuse from blame, but rather aggravates it, is that which our Savior and the prophets and apostles charge upon the perverse Jews, when they say they have eyes and see not, ears and hear not, hearts capable of understanding, and yet understand not. It consists in an indisposition, and perverse refusal, to exert those moral powers which men have.

He has here given a very good account. The disease lies wholly in the indisposition and perverseness of the will or heart; therefore, their not seeing, and all their inability to see, is their own fault. This account is, indeed, agreeable to Scripture, and to reason and common sense, and is the very same they give of the matter whom Mr. H. thinks he is opposing. He goes on: "But, upon the principles of Mr. Edwards's scheme, the inability of natural men to see, or rather taste, the sweetness of what he calls virtue, consists in the want of a natural faculty, or taste suited to the object." This is a most ungrounded and injurious assertion, directly contrary to the whole tenor of Mr. Edwards's writings. I might, on as good ground, say that, according to Mr. H. in the account above, men's inability to see consists in the want of a natural faculty, because they want a disposition or heart to see. Men shut their own eyes, through an indisposition and perverse refusal to exert the powers they have in seeing and relishing divine things. The Spirit of God alone can cure this evil disease of the heart by removing this indisposition and perverse refusal to see, and so opening the eyes of the blind. This is a renewing the will, or changing the heart, to discern and taste the sweetness and excellence of true holiness, and not giving any new natural faculty.

the gospel is vindicated, and they perish as despisers of it. This belief is consistent with my doctrine above."— *Letter to Dr. Whitaker*, p. 32.

On these words the following things may be noted: —

1. When Mr. H. says "the mind of man is naturally capable of being influenced and changed by the truth of the gospel, when firmly believed and realized," it is implied that it is not naturally capable of this until this is the case, — which he says is the work of the Spirit alone, — and that none can believe and realize it unless strongly impressed by the Spirit. According to this, men are not *naturally* capable of holiness, — i. e., have no natural capacity, while without the Spirit, causing them to realize the truth, and strongly impressing it on their minds, — therefore cannot be under obligation to be holy. Thus he, who, without any reason, charges Mr. Edwards with holding that sinners have no natural capacity of holiness, does himself assert it, so as to be justly liable to the charge.

2. He places all the sinner's duty in improving what he calls *common grace*, and the outward helps they have by the gospel, as far as they are improvable by them. This they may do without the exercise of the least degree of holiness; therefore, they are not obliged to be holy, they not being capable of it, until they have the special and effectual influence of the Spirit. Thus Mr. Hart holds that "men are under no natural obligation to be virtuous at all." With how poor a grace, then, does this objection against Mr. Edwards's doctrine come from him!

3. His *belief* that God will effectually lead them on to saving faith, and *so* regenerate them who improve the common influences of the Spirit, as far as they are improvable by them, — i. e., as far as is consistent with reigning lust and enmity against God, — is a belief without any evidence from Scripture, or any other quarter; and, therefore, this belief is doubtless consistent with *all* his doctrines, as it is with all the doctrines of Arminians and Pelagians, who have as much of this fond belief as Mr. Hart.

And now the reader is left to judge whether Mr. H. has, in any measure, supported his objection. I proceed to the consideration of another.

III. Mr. H. says, "Mr. Edwards is grossly inconsistent with himself in what he says of natural conscience."

Mr. H. observes Mr. Edwards says that "natural conscience, if well informed, will approve of true virtue, and will disapprove and condemn the want of it; and yet without seeing the true beauty of it. If men's consciences were fully enlightened, as they will be at the day of judgment, they would approve nothing but true virtue." And then remarks upon it, "Thus natural conscience does, and does not, can, and cannot, taste or approve the true beauty of virtue."

Answer. What has been said in answer to the first objection, may serve to show how groundless this is, and that Mr. Edwards is perfectly consistent here. Reason and conscience may be truly convinced, and judge that virtue consists in general benevolence, and in nothing else; and therefore that this is the highest beauty and excellence, and yet the mind have no taste for this beauty, and consequently no true discerning of it. Reason and conscience may be so enlightened and convinced, as to judge perfectly right in this matter, which will doubtless be the case at the day of judgment, without any taste of the beauty of virtue, and consistent with the greatest distaste and abhorrence of it.

Mr. H. might as easily, and with as much reason, fasten a contradiction on our Lord, because he has said of his persecutors, "They have both seen, and hated, both me and my Father," (John xv. 24;) and yet at the same time said of the same persons, "They have not known the Father, nor me." (Chap. xvi. 3.) And with as good reason might he charge St. John with expressly contradicting his Lord and Master, when he says, "Whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him." (1 John iii. 6.) Whereas Christ says of some of the greatest sinners, "They have seen both me and my Father." In a word, the Bible is so express in this, that they who do evil, even all who have no true virtue, whatever advantages they are under to know God, and whatever knowledge of God they have by natural conscience and moral sense, yet do not know God, nor have seen him, and do not see nor know the Holy Spirit, who is the sum of all holiness in God and the creature, (John xiv. 27,) that it is not a little wonderful Mr. H. should take such great exceptions against Mr. Edwards's saying the same thing, and imagine he had contradicted himself.

Mr. Edwards says, natural conscience, when well informed, and thoroughly awakened, approves true virtue, and indeed approves nothing that falls short of it. Upon this Mr. H. says, "But the secondary beauty falls short of it." Because Mr. Edwards had said there is in natural conscience a taste for secondary or natural beauty, he supposes he has here contradicted himself. But all the seeming contradiction lies in Mr. H.'s mistake. Mr. Edwards's plain meaning is, that natural conscience is capable of being convinced what true virtue is, so as to judge or pronounce that, and nothing which falls short of it, to be virtue. There may be a taste for secondary beauty, and yet conscience not approve of this as true virtue; but pronounce it not to be so.

The following words of Mr. H. are remarkable. Speaking of Mr. Edwards's sentiments, he says, "At the day of judgment, natural conscience will be so improved" (i. e., according to Mr. Edwards) "as to see the true beauty of virtue, consisting in general benevolence, and wholly approve it; which nothing but virtuous benevolence can do. Will not the wicked then become virtuous, according to this doctrine?"

Answer. The doctrine is not Mr. Edwards's, but Mr. H.'s.; one which he has invented and palmed on Mr. Edwards. Mr. Edwards does not say

that conscience will at the day of judgment see the true beauty of virtue, but he says directly the contrary in the clearest and strongest terms.*

We will now attend to Mr. H.'s account of natural conscience or moral sense, and see how he distinguishes it from a virtuous taste, between which he says there is "a real and essential difference." He says, "By the moral discernment and taste natural to man, we are constituted moral agents. By the exercise of this moral faculty, the things that are morally good or virtuous are seen to be so, as such are approved, the obligation we are under to choose and practise them is felt in some degree. This does not render a man virtuous. To render a man truly virtuous or holy, his heart must agree with his enlightened conscience or moral sense; or, in other words, his will must choose with preferring love, and a determined resolution to practise what is approved and recommended by the moral sense, and this not in some particular branches of virtue only, but in its whole extent. This sense, choice, and attachment of heart to God, or to virtue and its interests, is that wherein a truly virtuous taste or spiritual sense consists, as distinguished from the natural, moral sense of the mind; they are really two distinct things, though in perfect harmony.

On this it may be observed, —

1. What Mr. H. here says may be understood so as to be perfectly consistent with Mr. Edwards. He distinguishes natural conscience and moral sense from the heart or will, and supposes the latter may oppose the clearest dictates of the former. Mr. Edwards grants that by natural conscience "the things that are morally good or virtuous are seen to be so, as such are approved," so far as they can be seen and approved, without any taste or approbation of heart; and the obligation we are under to choose and practise them is in some sense and degree seen and felt, and that a virtuous taste consists in quite a different thing, viz., a disposition to love and choose what a well-enlightened conscience dictates to be right. And this is all Mr. H. seems to say here. If we understand him as meaning no more, it is not only consistent with all that Mr. Edwards says of natural conscience and a virtuous taste, but he will be consistent with himself when he says, "They who have not received the Spirit of God as their teacher, in his revelation of the hidden things of God to men, and do not give credit to his supernatural witness to their truth, but act under the biasing and blinding influence of the spirit of error and worldly lusts, do not receive these things as true and divine, neither can they know them to be so, so long as they refuse the light and witness of the Spirit of God; for they are spiritually discerned."—(*Letter to Dr. Wh——r*, p. 60.) I do not pretend to understand Mr. Hart's labored explanation of the text which speaks of the natural man's not discerning the things of the Spirit of God. He is to me very dark and confused, if not inconsistent, and has left the text as unintelligible, at least, as he found it.

* It is not easy to say how Mr. H. could be guilty of this gross misrepresentation and abuse, who is so great an advocate for fairness, candor, honesty, and justice in controversial writings. He must be very eager to find contradictions, who will take such a method to do it. No one will envy Mr. H. the triumph and flourish he has made upon this, in the following words: "Error is fated to run crooked. The greatest men cannot govern and keep it straight. It is our wisdom to have nothing to do with it. Since so great a man as Mr. Edwards could not alter its crooked nature, but was drawn by its wily turnings into numberless inconsistencies, it is in vain for others to attempt to manage so involved a creature." The error, the crookedness, be upon Mr. H. It lies wholly with him. If the great Edwards, who wrote with so much clearness and precision, may be so perverted and charged in the lump with numberless inconsistencies, it is truly in vain for others to attempt to tame the crooked, involved creature, who will do all this.

However, I think we may safely conclude that in the passage now quoted by them who have not received the Spirit, and do not give credit to his witness, he means all unholy men. And these, he says, do not receive the things of God as true and divine, neither can they know them to be so. Then certainly they do not see their true beauty and excellence — their blinding lusts do effectually blind their eyes to this; for if they see this, they must see them to be true and divine, and know them to be so. Now this is all that Mr. Edwards asserts. This therefore makes him inconsistent with himself in opposing Mr. Edwards; for he is herein opposing himself as much.

2. But if we understand him here as saying any thing really in opposition to Mr. Edwards, and agreeable to what he elsewhere supposes and asserts, viz., that men who have no virtuous taste do see the true beauty and excellence of virtue, and *relish* it as such, he has not only expressed himself in a very dark, ambiguous manner, so that it is difficult to know what he means, but *is* inconsistent with the above-quoted passage of his own, and even with himself in this very passage; but, what is worse, he contradicts the Bible, as well as plain reason and common sense. For, —

3. To see the amiableness and excellence of an object, and taste and relish it, as beautiful and excellent, is precisely the same with loving that object with a love of complacence. Therefore, if men naturally see God's holiness as amiable, beautiful, and excellent, and have a relish for it, as such, they do know God in the highest sense of knowing him, and they do love him; for these are one and the same thing. To say there is no love in this sweet sense and relish of God's amiableness, is contrary to reason and common sense. And to say that men naturally have such a knowledge and love of God, is contrary to Scripture, and is contrary to this very passage of Mr. H.'s; for he says this natural conscience and moral taste is a different thing from a virtuous taste; yea, there is an essential difference between them, and does not imply any relish or choice of the object, but the choice or will may be directly opposed to it. What, then, does Mr. H. mean by his moral taste? He gave such a description of it in his Dialogue, that it was thought it necessarily implied a degree of true love to God, and to holiness, or a really virtuous taste; but when he saw this construction was put upon it, he complained that he was greatly abused, and said he meant no such thing; but has not yet shown his consistence in this, so far as I can judge. He asserts that "a perception of beauty is not love" of beauty; but has offered no proof, nor will he ever do it.* Therefore, —

4. The only way I can think of to make Mr. H. in any measure consistent with himself in these things, is to suppose that by moral taste, by which the true beauty of virtue is seen and relished, he intends the same thing in kind with a virtuous taste; and that the difference lies wholly in the different degrees of the same kind of thing. That when this sight and relish of the beauty and excellence of virtue is in so low a degree as not to govern the mind, and suppress all contrary lusts, it is not true love to God or to holiness, so is not a holy love; that this consists not in this low degree of relish and love, but in a "preferring love," which so prevails as to bear down all opposite

* He has attempted to show that his moral taste, and sense of the amiableness of holiness, is not love of holiness, in his letter to Dr. Whitaker, to which the reader is referred. I do not see any proof of this in all that he has there said. The most that he says, is an account of natural conscience and moral taste, very consistent with that which Mr. Edwards gives, and he makes a proper distinction between this and the heart, choice or will, in its judgment in favor of virtue, etc. But he has not shown that there may be a sight of the beauty and amiableness of holiness, and a taste and relish for it, without any exercise of heart or choice in favor of it, and while the heart hates and opposes it. Unless he can do this, his cause cannot be maintained.

lusts. His way of expressing himself on this head gives ground to think this is his notion. In the passage under consideration, he says this moral sense, common to all men, approves of virtue, and feels the obligation they are under to practise it, in some degree; but does not render them virtuous, while vicious lusts prevail, and the prevailing relish of the heart is in opposition to this moral sense. To render a man truly virtuous or holy, his will must choose with preferring love and determined resolution to practise what is approved by the moral sense. And he always speaks after this manner on this subject. He says a man may see and approve the beauty of virtue, in some degree, when the ruling dispositions and exercises of his heart are inconsistent with this. Speaking of men who have no virtue, he says, "Their hearts in many instances concur, in some degree, with the moral sense of their minds. A sense of equity, moral honor, of gratitude, a spirit of benevolence, compassion, etc., and some kind of regard to God influence them to do many worthy deeds, when yet they will deny and counteract all these for some other lusts, and under greater temptations, and have no effectually governing regard to God, and to virtue, its interests and reward. The heart does not embrace the truths believed with governing love." He expresses himself in the same way on this head, in his letter to Dr. Whitaker. He says, "The sight and taste of the amiableness of holiness, and approbation of actions and characters morally good, is not holy love, as it is not the same with their being chosen and embraced by the will, in preference to all that stands in competition with them." And that it "is not the same thing with a supreme love and preferring choice of them by the heart, which is essential to true virtue." He does not say there is no degree of real love of holiness in this sight and relish of the true beauty of it; but he says it is not holy love, i. e., supreme love and preferring choice.

These expressions are suited to such a notion of virtue as consists in a prevailing, governing degree of the same kind of dispositions and exercises which all men have; but are not true virtue till they rise to such strength and high degree as to rule and govern in the heart. And, I think, they are not consistent with any other notion of it.

But if this is his notion, he has designedly covered himself, and carefully avoided speaking out plainly, which if he had done, we should better know what to say to him. For it might be easily proved that such a notion of virtue is very unreasonable, and contrary to the Bible. And it does not well consist with his saying, that this same taste and relish of the true beauty of virtue is essentially different from a virtuous taste; for the things which are of the same nature and kind, and differ only in degree, cannot properly be said to have an essential difference. So that even this supposition will not make him consistent. I hope, if he ever writes again, he will honestly and with all plainness tell what he means.*

As a conclusion to this and the foregoing section, the following observations may be made:—

1. The Holy Scripture represents all men who are not true believers, and not born of the Spirit, as in such darkness and blindness that they do not see and know God and Jesus Christ, and cannot see the things of God's kingdom, (John iii. 3;) do not see the Spirit of God, (John xiv. 17;) nor can discern the things of the Spirit, (1 Cor. ii. 14;) so that the gospel is hid from them, (2 Cor. iv. 3, 4.) That they only who have a virtuous taste, and are regenerate, do know God and Jesus Christ, (John xvii. 3; 1 John iv. 8,) and taste his goodness, (Ps. xxxiv. 8; 1 Pet. ii. 3;) i. e., discern and

* This was Dr. Mayhew's scheme, though he did not think it best to declare it expressly in any of his publications. And this is the scheme of most Arminians, and of many who call themselves *moderate Calvinists*. But none of them, I think, have yet undertaken expressly to vindicate it before the public.

relish his moral perfection, or holiness, which is love, or goodness. And they only have "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," (2 Cor. iv. 6,)—with respect to which all the unregenerate are in total darkness,—which glory can be nothing else but holiness, which is the beauty and glory of the moral world. And yet the Scripture represents these persons who are thus blind as actually blamable for not having that virtue and holiness which they do not see, and not loving what is hid from them; and that this blindness and unbelief is itself a very great crime, though they cannot be cured of it so as to see the marvellous light of God's beauty and glory by any thing but the mighty power of God quickening and new-creating them, making them new creatures, opening their eyes, or giving them eyes to see, or a new heart, a heart to perceive and understand.

Now, since this is the Scripture account, it is sufficient to support all that Mr. Edwards has said on this head, and ought to silence all Mr. H.'s objections, until he can show that it is not the same with that which Mr. Edwards has given, and is consistent with unregenerate men seeing and relishing these things in a sense and manner in which Mr. Edwards says they do not; for, as the case now stands, his objections seem to be equally against the Holy Scriptures.

2. What Mr. Edwards has said, and Mr. H. objects against, is perfectly agreeable to reason and experience. That they who have no virtue, and whose hearts are wholly governed by contrary inclinations and lusts, cannot, while they remain so, see and relish the beauty of true virtue, is, in a sense, a self-evident proposition, as the contrary implies a most evident contradiction.* Besides, we know by experience that we get the idea of all those things which belong to the mind and heart by what takes place in our own minds and hearts, and cannot obtain it any other way. For instance, we obtain the idea of love by the exercise of this in our own hearts; if nothing of this kind had ever taken place in our minds, we could not have any true idea of it; and though men exercise a sort of love, and so know what it is, yet, if this is a love which is distinct in its nature from disinterested benevolence, it will not help them to the true idea of such benevolence, and they never can have it till this takes place in their hearts. The inclination and lusts of their hearts, which are inconsistent with the least degree of benevolent love and goodness, do necessarily blind their eyes, and shut all true knowledge of this love, all true sense and relish of its beauty, out of their minds. However, they may, from the various tastes and exercises of their hearts and their mental powers, be able to reason well upon the subject, and be convinced that benevolence and the affections included in this is true virtue, and that nothing which falls short of it is virtue, or has any moral excellence. And as their eyes are shut to the beauty of holiness, and this is excluded from their hearts by nothing but their lusts, they really close their own eyes to keep the light from them, and are, therefore, wholly inexcusable in their ignorance and lusts; and their conscience may be convinced of this, and that they are justly condemned for their blindness and want of holiness.

3. Mr. H. has really acknowledged all this, even all that Mr. Edwards has asserted, so that all his opposition to Mr. Edwards is, in effect, opposition to himself. This has been evident, I conclude, to every attentive, discerning reader, from what has been observed. He allows that the eyes of all unbelievers are fast closed and shut, so as not to receive the knowledge of the truth,—which cannot be opened but by the powerful work of the Spirit of God,—and that this blindness is so far from excusing men for not being virtuous, and not seeing its beauty, that it rather aggravates their guilt;—that

* This is so evident that a heathen could say, "A mind destitute of virtue cannot see the beauty of truth."—*Hierocles.*

all the children of Adam are naturally without the Spirit of God, and that while they are in this case — in which they all are till they receive the spirit of Christ, and become true believers in him — "they are led and influenced in their judgment * concerning these things" (i. e., the things of the gospel) "by the spirit that is of this world; i. e., act under the biasing and blinding influence of the spirit of error and worldly lusts. Such do not receive these things as true and divine, neither can they know them to be so. They may, in some measure, see what his doctrine is, and see his works and witness by the gospel revelation, but they do not see the Spirit of God in them." — (*Letter to Dr. W.*, pp. 60, 61.)

If they do not see the Spirit of God in the doctrines and works of Christ, they do not see their holiness, but all the beauty of this is entirely hid from them; for he who is blind to the Holy Spirit is blind to holiness itself. This needs no proof. Now this is all that is implied in what Mr. Edwards has said. I know Mr. H. says, that, according to Mr. Edwards's doctrine, men have no natural capacity by which they may see the beauty of virtue, and become holy, and that they can be brought to this only by the immediate, physical, miraculous work of the Spirit of God, etc., but this might as reasonably be charged on Mr. H.'s doctrine, and as easily proved.

4. Not only man's blindness to the beauty of true virtue, which Mr. Edwards speaks of, is consistent with their obligations to holiness, but they may be obliged, though their reason and conscience be blinded and deceived. It is not necessary that natural conscience and moral taste should dictate right, and pronounce true holiness to be so, and that it is beautiful and excellent, and the contrary wrong and hateful, in order to the man's being under obligations to be holy, and wholly to blame for not being so. A man may be so deceived as to believe, in his conscience, that the highest virtue is nothing but a piece of wickedness, and that he ought to hate it, and yet be under obligations to love and practise it. This all will grant, I conclude. The reason is, because such blindness of the judgment and conscience, and perversion of the moral taste, is wholly owing to the blinding lusts of the heart; so that, if the heart were right, reason and conscience would judge according to truth. And if the heart remains blind, and sees not the beauty and exellence of virtue, but hates it, though the dictates of the conscience are right, and reason pronounces it beautiful and lovely, is not this as blamable, at least, as if reason and conscience agreed with the heart? Shall the blinding lusts of men's hearts take off all obligations to love what they disrelish and hate, though conscience tell them that it is excellent and lovely, when this same blindness of heart, if it blinds the conscience too, and bribes that to agree with it, would be altogether blamable? How unreasonable, then, is Mr. H.'s objection against Mr. Edwards's doctrine of the blindness of men's hearts with respect to the beauty of virtue! — as if, according to this, they were under no obligation to holiness! And it is now left to the reader to judge whether all his objections against Mr. Edwards's account of true virtue are not equally without foundation.

* "In their judgment." If by *judgment* here Mr. H. means reason and conscience judging, he carries the matter much farther than Mr. Edwards does, and farther than the truth; for he says the judgment, in this sense, may be right and according to the truth, even in men destitute of the Spirit, and under the dominion of the spirit of this world and their blinding lusts. It is granted that lust and sin in the heart does, in many instances, blind and pervert the reason and conscience of men; but this is not always so. If by "judgment" he means the taste and discerning of the heart, he asserts the same thing which Mr. Edwards does, and which he himself objects against.

SECTION IV

Mr. Hart's Account of the Essential Nature of True Virtue, and of a defective Sort of Virtue, considered.

As Mr. Hart had opposed Mr. Edwards's notion of true virtue as wrong, and subversive of all religion, and then undertook to show what is the essential nature of true virtue, we might reasonably expect he would fix on something which is, in its nature, essentially different from that which Mr. Edwards describes, and particularly show what it is, and wherein the difference lies; but we are wholly disappointed. He has not described virtue so as to give his readers any clear idea of it, or show wherein it differs from that which Mr. Edwards describes. He says true virtue consists in *equitable affection* towards God and our fellow-creatures. This is consistent with what Mr. Edwards has said. According to him, it consists in equitable affection; and he has particularly shown what this is, and that nothing is equitable affection but benevolence to being in general, and the affections included in this.

And when what Mr. Hart says about his "equitable affection" is put together, it will agree to nothing else but the same universal benevolence, or love to being in general, which he seems to think he is opposing. He allows that all equitable affection, or holiness in the creature, consists in love, and speaks of this as a love of kindness, or benevolence, — a "friendly regard" to the object beloved, — and says this is, "in effect, universal love," and that this universal, friendly love is a conformity to God's holiness, which must, therefore, consist in this same love. And he particularly speaks of this equitable affection in God as exercised in universal love, or goodness, which is the same with love to being in general, or to being as such, viz., a disposition "to give his family of rational creatures as great a measure of happiness as can be communicated by the exercise of a paternal government over them." Thus we see Mr. H. represents his equitable affection as a *friendly* love, which is really *universal* benevolence, which is love to being in general. And he says, "This spirit of equitable, *friendly regard* will dispose the virtuous mind to behave to every one in a manner suitable to their various characters, offices, and relations." This "friendly regard" is benevolence, and nothing else; and it must be universal benevolence if it will dispose to behave to *every one* in a suitable manner. And this must be true virtue in its essential nature, and comprehend the whole of holiness, as this will lead to all right exercises and conduct towards every one.

Mr. H. seems, indeed, to suppose that he is here opposing Mr. Edwards's notion of true virtue, as essentially wrong, and repeatedly asserts it to be so; but, as his assertions do not so much respect the essential nature of true virtue as the manner in which it takes place and begins in men, and the cause and medium by which it is produced, and as he says nothing here on this head which he had not said before, and has been considered, and since he does not pretend to argue, but seems to expect the reader will believe his bare assertions without any manner of proof, they are not worthy of any further attention. However, it may be proper to take a little notice of two passages in this chapter.

Mr. H. having asserted that "God himself is the source and support of virtue in us, which is the attraction and active tendency of our minds towards him, in consequence of their being brought under the attractive influence of his blessed character and gracious love to us in Jesus Christ," goes on to say: "To talk of a moral change in the mind, forming the heart to a virtuous temper, as preceding this attraction of God upon the mind, and as necessary

to render that effectual, is the same absurdity in divinity, or moral philosophy, as it would be in natural, to assert that a body naturally cold must first change its nature, and become of a hot nature, like the sun, before it can be warmed by the action of the sun's rays upon it, however near the sun may approach towards it.

Answer. A body naturally cold must be of such a nature and construction as to receive the rays of light and heat from the sun, or imbibe them so that they shall be in a sense incorporated with it, in order to its being warmed by them. If a body should not be of such a nature and construction, but formed so as to repel the rays of the sun, no degree of heat from the sun would impart the least heat to that till the nature of it is changed, or without the exertion of a power upon it entirely different from the influence of the heat of the sun. Mr. H.'s instance is, therefore, not to the purpose; for it does not appear that it is the least absurdity in natural philosophy to assert that a body *perfectly* cold, and of such a nature as to repel all heat, cannot be warmed by the action of the sun's rays upon it, for, by the supposition, they cannot act upon it while it is of such a nature.

The other passage I would take notice of is in the following words: "Virtue, as it respects our neighbor, summarily consists in loving him as ourselves; which implies that there is a love of ourselves which is virtuous and approved of God; otherwise, our loving our neighbor as ourselves could not be a virtuous love." What Mr. H. here observes is doubtless true, and his argument just and conclusive. There is a love of ourselves which is virtuous; but this is not self-love, for this is, in every degree of it, sinful, but it is that love of ourselves which is implied in universal benevolence. This has been already particularly considered.* Therefore, if Mr. H. by "a love of ourselves" meant selfishness, or any thing different from universal benevolence, his assertion is not true.

Mr. Hart has a chapter on "that defective Sort of Virtue which is found in some unregenerate Men," to which I shall now attend. He says "It is, undoubtedly, true in fact that many men who are not truly religious practise many duties. Their hearts, in many instances, concur, in some degree, with the moral sense of their minds. A sense of equity, of moral honor, of gratitude, and a spirit of benevolence, compassion, and some kind of regard to God, influence them to do many worthy deeds, worthy in some respects: so are, in a great degree, inconsistent with themselves in their dispositions and conduct." And he says of him who practises these duties, "The action he does is a right action, in respect to what is positive in it, commanded by God; and the motive on which he acts is a right motive — one of the motives God wills him to be influenced by." He says this is not true virtue, not because it is not in itself right and duty, but because it is not attended with something else which ought to take place, viz., an effectually governing regard to God.

On this the following observations may be made: —

1. There seems to be a great absurdity in this, viz., that a man's heart should concur, in some degree, with his enlightened conscience, or moral sense, and he have a spirit of true benevolence, and some kind of regard to God, under the influence of which he does his duty — what God requires — from the motives which God has commanded him to be influenced by, and yet not exercise the least degree of true holiness. This is, indeed, a great paradox, and seems to be as much of a contradiction as to say a man may be holy and yet have no holiness. If a person may do his duty, and have his heart conformed to the law of God in the exercise of true gratitude, benevo-

* See preceding Inquiry, Sect. IV. pp. 25, 26, 27.

lence, and compassion, or mercy, and yet not exercise any true virtue, it is, doubtless, impossible to tell what virtue is. If it does not consist in benevolence, in duty, and obedience to the law of God and conformity of heart to it, we may despair of ever finding it in any creature.

Mr. H. says this is not true virtue, but "essentially deficient," because there is no governing or religious regard to God. But this is so far from giving a rational account of the matter, that it supposes what is impossible, viz., that the former may be without the latter. There is no such character in nature as Mr. H. here gives. He whose heart is opposed to a religious regard to God is equally opposed to every thing which God has commanded. He who is benevolent and merciful knows God and loves him, and cannot but have a religious regard to him. (Jer. xxi. 15, 16. Matt. v. 7.) Mr. H. says, "It is undeniably true in fact that there is such a character;" but he has asserted this in opposition to Scripture and reason; yea, he has herein opposed himself, for, in the preceding chapter, he represents love to our fellow-men, and all equitable regard to them, as the fruit of love to God, and flowing from it, being "the result of a truly pious and filial regard to him." Here he asserts that this equitable regard to men — a regard to justice, benevolence, and compassion — takes place when there is no religious regard to God; and that, when this religious regard to God is added to this benevolence, it is sanctified by it, and forms a truly virtuous character.*

2. Since Mr. H. has only asserted these things, without attempting any proof of them, I have none of his arguments to answer. He has, however, referred to two passages of Scripture as an illustration of what he asserts, which perhaps ought to be considered. He observes, when the Jews had set their servants free, according to God's command, but soon brought them into bondage again, God, reproving them for their last conduct, says, with reference to their dismissing them, "Ye had done right in my sight." (Jer. xxxiv. 15.) This he mentions, I conclude, to prove that wicked men, who have no true virtue, may do that which is right in God's sight.

Answer. God in these words has reference to their external conduct, and not to their hearts and the motives from which they acted; and speaks to them not as the searcher of hearts, but as looking on their outward conduct, and treating them accordingly. Mr. H. allows that all the actions which spring from vicious motives and lusts of heart are positively vicious. But it is pretty evident the Jews did not let their servants go free from any higher or less vicious motive than that which influenced them to bring them into bondage again. The king of Babylon had laid close siege to the city, and they feared the destruction that was threatened. The prophets told them to dismiss their servants, as one way to obtain deliverance; but when their danger seemed to be over, the Chaldeans having raised the siege in order to repel Pharaoh's army which was coming for the relief of the Jews, they brought their servants into bondage again. They did not release them from any regard to justice, from benevolence and compassion, but from the same sordid, selfish motive, under the influence of which they forced them into their service again when they thought the danger of the evil was over, from fears of which they let them go. They acted from the same motive which induced Pharaoh and the Egyptians to let the Israelites go; and, therefore, when their fears of destruction were removed, they repented as Pharaoh did.

* This passage is agreeable to the notion that all men have *some degree* of that love to God and their neighbor in which true holiness consists; but, being defective, i. e., not *governing* love, it cannot be called holiness. The whole of this chapter is suited to such a notion, as is most Mr. H. says elsewhere of his moral taste, though he has some expressions which seem to be inconsistent with this. (See pp. 91, 92, of this Appendix.)

And I conclude Mr. H. will not say that Pharaoh exercised even his "defective sort of virtue" in letting the people of Israel go, and even thrusting them out of Egypt.

Mr. H. represents this defective virtue — which he says is "good," and "doing well," so far as it goes, "the agent being faulted only for that which is wanting in his work" — by what he says is called *historical faith*, of which St. James says, "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well:" but, lest men should rest here, he adds, "the devils also believe, and tremble." This he brings as a proof that wicked men may do well, and supposes that, to encourage them to do better, the apostle adds, "the devils also believe, and tremble." It is evident, at first view, that he tells them their doing well was no better than what the devils do; yea, he represents the devils as going farther than they did, for they not only believe, but tremble. Can any one seriously think the apostle meant to represent the devils as doing well? This is shocking, indeed! As well may we suppose our Savior commends the Pharisees and scribes as doing well, when he says, "Full well ye reject the commandment of God." (Mark vii. 9.) The sense of the apostle's words is as plain and natural as of these words of Christ, and they are spoke in the same way: as if he had said, "You believe there is one God. Well done! a fine attainment this! This is to do as well as the devils, except that they not only believe, but tremble also." It is to be observed that the word used by Christ, translated *full well*, is the same that the apostle uses here. If Mr. H.'s defective sort of virtue is "fitly resembled" to this faith, as he says it is, and is found to as great degree, at least, among the devils as "in some unregenerate men," it turns out to be a very low, "defective sort of virtue" indeed, by which they who have it are not much distinguished from the worst of men, unless *they* are much worse than devils.*

Mr. H. says, "There are certain middle principles or springs of action, wrought into the mind of man by our gracious Creator, which, though they are not virtuous, and do not necessarily imply a principle of virtue in the heart, yet are friendly to virtue, and espouse its cause within us, suppose the mind duly instructed. Such are reason, natural conscience, the moral sense or taste," etc.

Remark 1. It seems to be a contradiction that there should be any thing in the mind of man which is friendly to virtue which is not virtue, nor implies any principle of virtue in the heart. Can there be any thing in the heart friendly to virtue, which has nothing of the nature of virtue? If a man is a true friend to virtue, we think we may safely pronounce him a virtuous man.

Remark 2. What Mr. H. instances here are consistent with the highest degree of wickedness, as they take place in a higher degree in devils than in men. Reason and natural conscience, if enlightened, do, in a sense, "espouse the cause of virtue," i. e., bear testimony in its favor. But this is consistent with the greatest degree of vice, and serves to set the sinner further from all virtue, if possible, by rendering him more criminal and vile; for the more clear this testimony is, the more opposition is made to it by the sinner, and the more criminal he is in refusing to comply with the dictates of his conscience. This Mr. H. himself allows. He says, "These have some degree of influence in natural men." I ask, What influence? Do they influence them in the least degree to comply with that whose cause they espouse? This Mr. H. denies, for this would make them virtuous.

* Mr. H. complains of Dr. Whitaker for saying "man is turned devil," and says, "Before he gets out of his hands he makes him look worse than a devil." But he has now fallen into the same wickedness himself, while he represents those men who do not believe and tremble as worse than devils.

All the influence they can have, then, while their hearts oppose virtue, is to render this opposition more vile and criminal, as well as stronger, and more directly turned against that in which true virtue consists. Mr. H. allows that if men resist the call of reason and conscience, and refuse to comply with their dictates, they hereby become much worse, and that herein consists the exceeding sinfulness of sin; but this they do so long as they refuse to become truly virtuous, if conscience espouses the cause of virtue in them. What room, then, is there left for Mr. H.'s "defective sort of virtue," by means of the dictates of natural conscience? It is wholly excluded, or rather is nothing but the exceeding sinfulness of sin.

Remark 3. If we should grant all Mr. Hart says here, that "there are principles or springs of action, wrought into the mind of man by our gracious Creator, which are friendly to virtue," why may not a principle of true virtue be wrought into the mind by God, as well as these principles which are friendly to virtue? These principles of action, which are favorable to virtue, are not wrought in the mind by moral power, or the power of divine truth, or love, but by creating power, I conclude Mr. H. will allow. Why may not the principles and springs of virtuous actions themselves be wrought into the mind in the same way and by the same power? The same power that can form in the mind principles friendly to virtue, can, doubtless, create virtuous principles themselves in the very same way.

Mr. H., speaking of his defective sort of virtue, says, "There is an essential defect in the agent, which renders him not well accepted. His action is essentially deficient, and cannot be accepted as an instance of true, divine virtue." And yet he says, in the same page, "There is something in them which is right, and required by God. This is approved, not abhorred and thrown back as dung in the faces of the doers of them." This seems to be no less than a contradiction. The same doings are not well accepted, and cannot be accepted, and yet they are approved, i. e., are accepted; for I conclude *accepted* and *approved* mean the same thing. Besides, is it not very unreasonable, and even daring presumption, to say that the infinitely holy God *approves* of that moral exercise and conduct which is confessed not to be of the nature of holiness?

On the whole, Mr. H. in this chapter censures them who represent all the doings of the unregenerate as having nothing in their nature but sin and an abomination to God, and their best moral actions as altogether vicious and in direct opposition to the spirit and law of God, but has offered no matter of conviction from Scripture or reason. Any judicious person who reads this chapter must be sensible how empty it is of any shadow of argument.

This middle character, this sort of exercises and doings which are neither sinful nor holy, is not known in the Bible, and is a mere chimera, full of inconsistencies. This, I trust, will appear to any one who attends to the account given from the Scripture of holiness and sin, in the foregoing Inquiry. The Scripture representation of all men by nature is, that "there is none that doeth good, no, not one;" (Rom. iii. 12;)—that the mind, the whole heart, of every one who has not the spirit of Christ, is enmity against God and his law. (Rom. viii. 7–9.) And Christ says, "He that is not for me is against me. Either make the tree good, and his fruit good, or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt." Mr. H. has not taken this advice, but has made the fruit of a tree, which he acknowledges to be corrupt, not corrupt, but good, even so good as to be approved by God!

APPENDIX II.

REMARKS ON SOME PASSAGES IN THE PIECE, ENTITLED, "THE VISIBLE CHURCH IN COVENANT WITH GOD, FURTHER ILLUSTRATED. CONTAINING, ALSO, A BRIEF REPRESENTATION OF SOME OTHER GOSPEL DOCTRINES WHICH AFFECT THE CONTROVERSY. INTERSPERSED WITH REMARKS UPON SOME THINGS ADVANCED BY DR. BELLAMY AND MR. HOPKINS IN THESE IMPORTANT POINTS. BY MOSES MATHER, A. M."

Mr. Mather's "representation of some other gospel doctrines" is founded wholly on the account he gives of SELF-LOVE. If what he says of this is true, he has, indeed, made some new discoveries, upon which he has built a system of doctrines. He says, As self-love is essential to man as a moral agent, Adam was possessed of it in a state of perfect holiness, and he had this same self-love when he had turned rebel against God; and as God was now become his enemy, and all the divine perfections were against him, and stood engaged to destroy him, to love God in this situation would be the same with loving his own misery and total destruction, which being contrary to his self-love which God had implanted in him, it was naturally impossible he should love God. Nor was it his duty to love him in these circumstances, as it was not only impossible, but contrary to the divine command, for he was commanded to love himself. And all Adam's posterity are in much the same state he was in after the fall, so that it is neither possible for them, nor their duty, to love God until they understand and believe the gospel, which sets the divine character in a new light, and opposite to that in which it appears in the law, and declares his love and kindness to them. This discovery and belief will reconcile their hearts to God so that they cannot but love him, and embrace the gospel from this same principle of self-love, from which they, before this, necessarily hated God; and, therefore, need no new principle in their hearts in order to turn to God and become real Christians.*

* Mr. M. does not expressly say it is the duty of men to *hate* God before they believe the report of the gospel, but this is necessarily implied in what he says; for the same self-love which renders it impossible to love God renders it equally impossible not to hate him, while he is considered as disposed to destroy them; and if we are commanded to exercise this self-love which is opposed to God, this is the same with being commanded to oppose and hate him! Mr. M. thinks he has proved this self-love is commanded, from the words of the command, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor *as thyself*." This argument has been confuted in the preceding Inquiry. (See pp. 26, 27.)

All this Mr. M. thinks he has demonstrated by the help of *self-love*, using the word without any fixed, determinate meaning, and in different senses.

When he says self-love is essential to man, as a moral agent, he means a general love of happiness; but when he infers from this that Adam's self-love, after he had sinned, rendered it impossible for him to love God, he means quite a different thing by self-love, viz., selfishness, which is most properly called self-love. Nothing is, therefore, necessary, in order to see the futility of all he says on this head, but to attend to what has been said on this subject in the preceding Inquiry, pp. 22–27.

When Adam saw himself condemned by the law of God, and all the divine perfections were against him, had he been a benevolent friend to the greatest good of the whole, he might, with the greatest gust for happiness, have placed his happiness in the honor of God, as the greatest good, and dreaded his dishonor, and an injury done to his government and kingdom, as the greatest evil, and most heartily say, "Let God be glorified; let his government be maintained, and his kingdom flourish, whatever becomes of me, or any other creature." And he might have been pleased with God's perfections and law, as excellent and worthy to be loved and honored, though they were against him, and implied his destruction; for their excellence appeared in this very thing. Nothing was inconsistent with this but that selfishness in which all his rebellion consisted. In short, nothing was in the way of Adam's loving God in this state but his sin, consisting in a disposition to love himself only, and exalt himself above God, which was implied and acted out in his first rebellion. And if this rendered it not his duty to love God, and made hatred of him no crime, then his first rebellion was no sin, and there never was, nor will be, any such thing as sin; for every one that rebels against God does it in the exercise of that self-love which is contrary to loving and obeying him.

Mr. M., by the help of his "self-love," also undertakes to show that what I have published concerning the state and character of the unregenerate cannot be true. I have represented an unregenerate sinner, who is awakened to fearful apprehensions of the wrath to come, and has a painful sense of his continual exposedness to it, and is convinced in his conscience that salvation is freely offered to him, and that it is his duty and highest interest to embrace the offer and return home to God, that in this way and no other he may escape the evil he dreads, and be eternally happy, — under all this light and conviction of conscience yet obstinately refusing to embrace the gospel, and his heart rising against God, more directly and with greater strength than it did before he had this conviction, in horrid exercises of hatred, enmity, and fixed opposition to God's character and government. Mr. Mather says this is impossible, as it is contrary to self-love; — that human nature is not capable of acting such a part, as this would be disinterested malice — yea, more, "such a fixed, inveterate malice as overcomes all regard to his own happiness in the sinner's heart."

Answer. Upon the principle on which Mr. Mather opposes me here, the sinner always heartily complies with what his judgment and conscience are convinced is for his interest; for if his heart may, in any instance, refuse to embrace what he is convinced in his conscience would be for his interest to embrace, he may do so in any instance, even in the instance before us; and all Mr. M. says is against the former as much as the latter: but that the former is true none will deny. Is there no instance in our world of a person's refusing to comply with what he was convinced, in his conscience, was his duty, and for his own interest? Are there not innumerable instances of this every day? — yea, have we not all a witness in our own breasts that our hearts in many instances have not conformed to the dictates of our consciences, but have refused to love and embrace that which we have been convinced in our consciences would be for our highest interest to love and

embrace? Mr. M. is not such a stranger to mankind and to himself as to be insensible of this, I conclude. And if a man's heart may oppose his conscience, telling him what is most for his interest in one instance, it may in another, and in any supposable case whatsoever. Does Mr. M. think that nothing is necessary in order to the conversion of a sinner but to convince his judgment and conscience that it is for his interest to embrace the gospel, and that all who have this conviction are certainly converted and saved? Surely he does not. Why, then, has he supposed it in his opposition to the proposition under consideration?

And when a sinner's heart exercises itself as in the case before us, it supposes no disinterested malice, or any thing contrary to the greatest degree of self-love; yea, it is purely from self-love, and because his heart is under the dominion of this, that he thus opposes the dictates of his conscience, and hates God, his law and government, Jesus Christ and the gospel; and that because all these are contrary to self-love. The sinner's heart must cease from loving himself wholly, and love God supremely, and exercise that benevolence which loves and seeks the glory of God and the general good, in order to be willing to embrace the gospel. This the selfish or unregenerate heart is fixed in opposition to; and the more clear conviction he has in his conscience that it is for his interest to love God, and the more his conscience is convinced of the truths respecting the divine character, the nature and true import of the gospel, the more fully will he find these things to be contrary to his heart, or his selfishness, and, consequently, the more strong and vigorous will be the opposition of his heart to them.

The pride of a man's heart may oppose true humility, and be the only reason of his obstinately refusing to submit to it, while under a conviction of conscience that to be humble is the only way to be truly happy and honorable. The pride of a man's heart, which, at bottom, is nothing but selfishness, seeks honor and happiness which are not the honor and happiness that attend humility, but of a different and opposite kind. And his being convinced in conscience that, in opposing humility, he opposes the greatest good, will not alter the taste and bent of his heart, or render the honor and happiness that attend humility any more agreeable to his pride than they were before. The proud heart will oppose humility at all times, and under all imaginable convictions of conscience: so the selfish heart will oppose benevolence, and every thing that implies it, whatever conviction of conscience there may be that selfishness is the source of continual misery, and that the benevolent are only happy. You may convince the conscience of the covetous miser that it is his duty, and for his interest, to be charitable and liberal, as with such a disposition he would enjoy himself more, and have more comfort in what he possessed, and hereby lay up immense, eternal riches. But would this certainly make his selfish, covetous heart charitable and liberal, or do any thing towards it? It might induce him to give something to the poor, but, so far as he is influenced to this by mere selfishness, it would be as far from charity, and as really opposite to it, as were any of his former exercises. How, then, it will be asked, shall this selfish churl become liberal? *Answer.* Not merely by being convinced in his judgment that to be liberal is the only way to become truly rich and happy, and hence from his selfishness desiring and attempting to be liberal, (for all such desires are, by supposition, selfish desires and attempts, and as opposite to liberality as were his former desires and attempts,) but by having a new heart given him — a truly benevolent, liberal, bountiful heart.

Mr. M. says, "If the enmity of our hearts is really a principle of disinterested malice, it must be owned that the more it is opposed by the light and convictions of conscience, it will work in our hearts after the manner here described;" — i. e., the more light and conviction the conscience has, the higher will the fixed hatred and opposition of the heart rise against

God; — and he grants that, on this supposition, "no light and conviction of conscience can humble, subdue, and convert the heart;" and that, "therefore, regeneration is the effect of mere and immediate divine power."

I am as confident, as Mr. M. or any one else can be, that there is no such thing in nature as "disinterested malice;" and if it can be made to appear that any thing I have asserted concerning the unregenerate implies any such thing, I am ready to retract it. All sinful exercises are interested and selfish: all sin consists in self-love, and those affections that are implied in it and flow from it. There is properly no disinterested affection but that in which holiness consists. This has been proved in the foregoing Inquiry.

And why is not the exertion of mere and immediate power as necessary to subdue the heart which is under the power of this selfishness, as if it was full of disinterested malice? And how will conviction of conscience remove the former, and turn it into benevolence, any more than the latter? I believe none can give any reason for this. I think, therefore, Mr. Mather has really granted the whole I have asserted, by his concession under consideration. Selfishness is as opposite to holiness, or disinterested benevolence, in its whole nature and all its exercises, as disinterested malice could be, if any such thing were possible, and the former is as strong and fixed a principle as the latter could be. Let any one give a good reason why disinterested malice, were this possible, might not be removed by light, or conviction of conscience, and that mere and immediate divine power is necessary to subdue and convert such a heart, and it will be as good a reason why all this must be true of a heart wholly under the dominion of that self-love which is most opposite to holiness of any thing in nature, and, indeed, the only thing in the heart that can oppose it.

This brings the matter in dispute to a point, and may lead us to see what is the ground of our difference on this head. It has its foundation in different notions of the nature of true holiness, and so of God's moral character, which is the sum and pattern of all true holiness. If the true scriptural holiness has been described in the foregoing Inquiry, then all must grant that what I have advanced about the state and character of the unregenerate, and the necessity of "mere and immediate divine power" to change the sinner's heart, must be true and agreeable to Scripture. Mr. Hart acknowledges this, and Mr. M. implicitly acknowledges it in the passage now under consideration. The truth is, if holiness consists, in whole, or in part, in selfishness, or if this is, in any degree, friendly to true holiness, and does not oppose it, then he who has all possible depravity may be recovered to holiness without any immediate divine power exerted to change his heart. Nothing is needful in order to this, but to have his conscience enlightened to see what holiness is, how agreeable it is to his selfishness, and suited to gratify it, and what kindness and wonderful love God exercises towards him, which is suited to affect and win his selfish heart, and draw forth strong exercises of love to them that love him, while God requires nothing of him that is not perfectly agreeable to self-love, — I say, on this supposition nothing is needful in order to conversion, but that light and conviction of conscience which shall bring these things into clear view.

But then it must be observed, such a conversion is really no change of heart at all. It is supposed that the perfectly selfish heart is disposed to love God and holiness, and embrace the gospel, whenever they are truly and properly set before it; and love to God and holiness, and embracing the gospel, are nothing but selfishness exercised towards these things; and all religion and holiness is nothing but self-love, and what springs from this root; and that disinterested affection, which has been spoken of as opposite to selfishness, and as that in which all true holiness consists, is no part of holiness, but a mere chimera, being as contrary and impossible to human nature as disinterested malice. Here lies the great difference between us,

even in our different and opposite notions of the nature of holiness, and of the divine, moral character. If we were agreed in this, we should be agreed in our notions about total depravity, the state and character of the unregenerate, regeneration, etc. Mr. M. makes the total depravity of fallen man, primarily and radically, to consist in his incapacity of loving God, — because this was, in that state, contrary to self-love, — together with the darkness that was on his mind. But this cannot properly be called depravity, as it is not in the least degree sinful, it being naturally impossible, and so not his duty, to love God in these circumstances. But, if it were allowed to be sinful depravity in some degree, it cannot be *total* depravity, according to Mr. Mather, for this, his self-love, was a good thing, even a duty which was commanded in the divine law; and it was ready to flow out in love to God whenever he should be revealed in a truly amiable light, even as the kind Savior of sinners. According to this, self-love is itself holiness, and that in which it radically and summarily consists.

I have said (*Sermon on Regeneration*) that the doctrines of the total corruption of man, and regeneration by light in the understanding, were inconsistent with each other, and no one has yet proved the contrary; but the evidence of the truth of this assertion rather increases, in that all who undertake to vindicate this notion of regeneration do, in order to do it, really deny total depravity. If self-love is so friendly to holiness, and such an essential ingredient in it, that, when the conscience is properly enlightened, this same self-love will grow up, and act out, in all the branches of holy love, then man is not totally depraved, for he has this good principle in him, which, being cultivated, will grow up into all holiness. But if self-love is, in every degree of it, opposed to holiness, and that in which human depravity consists, and fallen man is wholly under the power of this, and the more strongly this is exerted the more he opposes God and holiness, then no degree of light and conviction of conscience will change his heart, or produce new and opposite principles there; but the more light and conviction is in the conscience the more clearly the hateful object, holiness, is set before the mind, the more directly and vigorously will self-love hate and oppose it. This all will grant, on the supposition made; so that the dispute really is, whether man is totally depraved, and what true holiness is — whether it is opposed to selfishness, or whether selfishness itself is not friendly to it. The dispute, therefore, is to be determined by determining what true holiness is. If the foregoing is a true and scriptural account of it, the controversy is decided by the confession of all. I hope, therefore, in all disputes on this head, for the future, that which at bottom is in question will be kept in view, viz., What is holiness? What is the divine character? What is God? If we can be agreed in this, we shall agree in all the rest.

Mr. Mather says, "But Solomon did not apprehend that natural corruption would rise the higher the more it is opposed. 'Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.' (Pr. xxii. 15.) If, then, this corruption does not necessarily rise the higher the more it is opposed, but does sometimes yield, why may we not suppose that the Father of our spirits, through light powerfully impressed on the conscience by the Holy Spirit, may obtain a more complete victory over this corruption than ever is obtained by human correction, even so as that it may be truly mortified?"

In answer to this it may be observed, if these words prove any thing against the doctrines I have advanced, they prove too much — more than Mr. M. himself will grant, or can be true, consistent with the whole current of Scripture. If foolishness means natural corruption in general, and the rod of correction will drive it *far* from him, then it is overcome and mortified, and there is no need of any thing else in order to effect it, or to obtain a more complete victory over this corruption, than is obtained by the rod of

correction. If the rod of correction will remove and subdue this corruption in any degree, no reason can be given why it may not wholly remove and subdue it. Therefore, the consequence from the words is this: "If, then, the natural corruption of the heart does yield, and will submit, under the discipline of the rod, why may we not suppose, yea, be certain, that the rod of correction, properly and powerfully applied, will obtain a complete victory over it?" If this reasoning is not just, neither is Mr. Mather's.

These words may be taken in three different senses, and let which will be the right, neither of them are to Mr. Mather's purpose.

1. By the "rod of correction" may be meant the whole of parental discipline and education. This, when wisely and faithfully administered and practised, may, by divine constitution and promise, be connected with the deliverance of the child from sin, so that God's blessing, and his giving a new heart to a child, is the certain attendant or fruit of such education and discipline. In this sense the words in the sixth verse of this chapter may be understood: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." And agreeably to this it is expressly said, "Withhold not correction from the child. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell." (Pr. xxiii. 13, 14.) If God has promised to the child which is faithfully and wisely educated under parental discipline, and brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, deliverance from sin and hell, this does not determine any thing about the manner in which God effects this, whether he gives a new heart by light, or immediate divine influence. And it is consistent with the child's being more perverse, and his corruption rising higher and growing stronger under discipline, if God's blessing should be withheld.

2. If these words, with the others just mentioned, only import that this is a proper means and the likeliest way to turn a child from sin, and promote his salvation, they determine nothing with regard to the matter in dispute.

3. If by "foolishness" is here meant, not corruption of heart in general, but those particular exercises and outbreakings of it in which children are stubborn and rebellious and impatient of restraint, — by which they show their folly, and render themselves disagreeable and troublesome to all who have any special connection with them, — children may, by a wise parental government, be cured of this folly; it may be driven far from them, and they, as to their external appearance and conduct, be quite different from those who have no education, or a bad one. The many examples of this are sufficient to confirm this observation. But this discipline, by which children are thus formed, does not eradicate or subdue the corrupt principles of their hearts. The corruption of their hearts is restrained from acting out in that particular way, and is turned into some other channel, and may act with as much strength another way, and more. It will do so, unless the heart be renewed by the Spirit of God.

Mr. M. here refers to President Edwards's book on freedom of will, and says, "The whole design of that book is to prove that the will is as the greatest apparent good is. All the arguments there offered must be confuted, before this character here given of the sinner can be established."

Answer. President Edwards does not attempt to prove, nor say, that the will always is according to the conviction and dictates of the judgment and conscience, with respect to what is best and most for a person's interest, but he says directly the contrary; and the whole that he says, in showing that the will is as the greatest apparent good, shows that he does not mean the appearance that is made to the judgment and conscience only, but to "the whole faculty of perception, or apprehension, and not merely what is called reason, or judgment." He supposes the heart may be such as to resist the clearest dictates of conscience, so that what this dictates to be most for his interest shall not be the greatest apparent good, but something directly

opposite. If President Edwards had said any thing inconsistent with this, it would be contrary to known fact and universal experience.

To the selfish heart that which selfishness dictates is the greatest apparent good, and not what reason and conscience dictate. Therefore, to such a heart *that* is always the greatest apparent good which opposes universal disinterested benevolence. If selfishness is agreeable to itself, and a selfish good is to this the greatest apparent good, then this benevolence is disagreeable, and it opposes and hates this and the highest good which it seeks as the greatest evil. Mr. M., speaking of Adam in his fallen state, says, "He having now a separate interest from God, there was, of course, contrariety to the divine character, so far forth as that stood in opposition to his own separate interest." The selfish man always has a separate interest from God. This is the very nature of self-love; it consists in setting up a separate interest from God, and therefore is, of course, in its nature, contrariety and enmity to the divine character, for this always did, and always will, stand in direct opposition to the separate interest of a selfish man; and this separate interest will be the greatest apparent good to selfishness, whatever reason and conscience may dictate to the contrary.

Mr. M. thinks the doctrines about regeneration, which he is opposing, originated from what President Edwards has advanced in his treatise on religious affections, where he represents holiness, and the exercises of it, as something of a different nature from any thing that takes place in unholy men, and says that, in these holy exercises and affections, "there is a new inward perception or sensation of the minds of holy persons, entirely different in its nature and kind from any thing that ever their minds were the subjects of before they were sanctified," which he calls "a new spiritual sense." This, Mr. M. thinks, is a great error, and of a very bad tendency, it being the source of a set of doctrines which he calls "new divinity," which, says he, "are surprisingly spread in the land in the present day."

No wonder Mr. M. objects against this, seeing, if it is true, it overthrows all his divinity at once. According to him the same self-love, which in unholy men is inconsistent with their loving God, and leads them to hate and oppose him, is a principle of holiness in the saints, and is really exercised in true love to God, when their eyes are opened to see that his character is favorable to their own dear selves, and that they have been under a sad mistake all their days before; so that holiness does not differ, in nature and kind, from unholiness, or sin. But if holiness consists in benevolence and the affection implied in it, and this is, in its nature, different from selfishness, and opposed to it, what Mr. Edwards says of holy affections must be true. So that we still see the dispute is about the nature of holiness, or what is God's moral character. If we were agreed about this, it would end the controversy.

Mr. Mather makes three objections against Mr. Edwards's doctrine on this head.

First. He says, "If regeneration is such a change as is here described, it is evidently not a moral, but a *physical* change." His argument is this: Giving this new spiritual sense, or taste, is the same with giving a new bodily sense, or opening the eyes of the blind; but this would be a physical change; therefore, the giving this taste is a physical change.

Ans. 1. The Scriptures, speaking of this change, represent it by giving eyes to see — a being turned from darkness to marvellous light — giving a new heart — the new creature, or new creation — a being raised from death to life, etc. These expressions as strongly import a physical change as does Mr. Edwards's description of it, and are, therefore, as liable to Mr. Mather's objection. Mr. M. thought of this, and said, "I am sensible that very *strong* expressions are used in the Scripture about this change; it is styled a 'new creation,' etc.; but, if regeneration is no other than a moral change, then

those strong Scripture expressions will not warrant us to describe it as a physical change." These Scripture expressions are full as strong as Mr. Edwards's. What warrant, then, had Mr. M. to say *his* import a physical change, when he owns he has none to put such a construction on the Scripture? He has not offered a word to show why Mr. Edwards's description of this change does make it a physical change which will not equally prove that the description of it in Scripture makes it so.

Ans. 2. What does Mr. M. mean by a *physical change*? I think he has not sufficiently explained himself. Mr. Edwards expressly says he does not mean, by his new spiritual sense, or taste, any thing which implies any new natural faculties of the soul, of understanding and will, but that it consists in a new disposition of the same will, or affection of heart. And if this is not a moral change, and nothing else, let Mr. M. show why it is not, and tell what a moral change is, and what he means by it. A moral change is a change of the heart, or will, in which it is disposed to hate what it before loved, and to love and choose those objects to which it before had an aversion, with a new kind of sensation, or love, which it never had before. And will not Mr. Mather allow that men pass a change like this in regeneration and conversion? A physical change is a change of the natural faculties of the soul, or giving new natural faculties; but this is no more implied in the change Mr. Edwards describes than in that which Mr. M. supposes takes place in regeneration; and Mr. E. expressly declares he does not mean any such thing.

Mr. M. says, "If God should give sight to one that was born blind, we should readily agree that the change wrought in him was physical, and not a moral change; and it is equally evident that it is a real physical change which is here described by Mr. Edwards. And to describe regeneration as a proper physical change, and then say, We do not mean so, is only to bewilder ourselves and our readers about that important change." It appears that Mr. M. has bewildered himself by not sufficiently attending to the matter, and not distinguishing between a change of the heart, in which a new inclination takes place there which was not there before, and that change in which a new natural faculty is given in which the heart is not in the least concerned. This appears by the instance he brings. He has bewildered himself in not distinguishing between a spiritual sense, which consists in the disposition or affection of the heart, and our bodily senses. If a man, who has always been wholly contracted and selfish in all his views, designs, and pursuits, becomes benevolent and generous, in a hearty love of God and his neighbor, placing all his happiness in the glory of God and the greatest good of the creation, he is turned from darkness to marvellous light, and has a set of sensations that are quite new and opposite to any thing he had before. But is this, therefore, a physical change? It is altogether of a moral kind, if there is any such thing as moral change. Now this is the change Mr. Edwards describes.

Ans. 3. Mr. Mather's regeneration has much more of the appearance of a physical change than that which Mr. Edwards describes, and will be found to be really such, I believe, if examined. He supposes the change, as wrought by God, to be wholly in the understanding, considered as distinct from the will, and to consist in giving a new set of ideas, in which the will or heart is not concerned, and which could not take place, however well disposed the heart is, as they are entirely independent of any disposition of heart. Now this is no more a moral change than any other change whatsoever.

Secondly. Mr. M. says, "If regeneration is such a physical change, the sinner is so far from being to blame for his continuing in an unregenerate state, that he is wholly excused from all blame."

Ans. 1. This is granted, *if* regeneration is a physical change, i. e., is a change not of the disposition of heart, but of something else independent

of this. But Mr. Edwards describes no such change, but only a change of heart, which consists wholly in new sensations and affections, in which it turns from sin to God.

Ans. 2. This objection is made with an ill grace by Mr. M., for, though it is groundless as made against Mr. Edwards, it lies with full force against himself, and all who hold that men are regenerated by light, and not by giving a new taste and disposition of heart; for, according to them, the difficulty of the sinner's forsaking sin and turning to God does not properly lie in the heart, or will, but in the understanding, which, being blinded, does not see divine objects in a true light. This is the only cause of their continuing unregenerate, and not any thing wrong or blamable in the will. The fault is wholly in the understanding; and this is a blameless fault, or defect, for the will, or heart, has no hand in it, and can no more help or remove it, however well inclined, than a blind man can restore himself to sight. All that hold to regeneration by light, without any immediate divine influence on the will, may be challenged to show how men are wholly to blame for continuing in a state of unregeneracy, or that this is any crime at all. They never can do it; nor can they tell how this is consistent with total depravity, for this is always implicitly, if not expressly, denied in all they say in vindication of their scheme.

But Mr. M. has gone beyond all others on this head, and expressly declared that Adam was, in his fallen state, under a natural impossibility of loving God, and that his total depravity, which is the same with a state of unregeneracy, primarily and radically consisted in this, together with the darkness that was upon his mind, and that this is the case with his posterity. How, then, can they be to blame for continuing in this state, which is wholly owing to their external circumstances, and a natural impossibility they are under of being otherwise? And yet this same Mr. M. thinks it is a sufficient objection against Mr. Edwards's scheme, if it is inconsistent with sinners' being to blame for continuing in a state of unregeneracy!

Thirdly. Mr. M. says, "If regeneration is such a *physical* change, it will follow that every regenerate person must have the most certain knowledge of it."

Answer. It is not a physical change. But if it were, why must the subjects of it be more certain of the change than if it were a moral change? The exercises and affections of the heart are as perceptible as any thing that can take place in the mind. And when, in this respect, all old things are passed away, and all things are become new, and a person is called out of darkness into marvellous light, this change is, in its own nature, as perceivable, and the subject may be as sure of it, if called moral, as if it were called physical; and its being really a moral or physical change alters not the case with respect to the evidence, or certain knowledge, of it.

The only reason that can be given why every person that is possessed of real holiness — let him come by it how he will, and whatever may be the change that brought him to it — has not the certain knowledge of it, is that he has so small a degree of it, and is no more changed and conformed to God, and so much darkness and sin still remain in his heart. But it is needless to spend time to answer such an objection. It is not easy to say by what means it was suggested to Mr. Mather, and why he thought it worthy to be inserted.

APPENDIX III.

AN ANSWER TO THE REV. MR. HEMMENWAY'S "VINDICATION OF THE POWER, OBLIGATION, AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF THE UNREGENERATE TO ATTEND THE MEANS OF GRACE, AGAINST THE EXCEPTIONS OF THE REV. SAMUEL HOPKINS."

INTRODUCTION.

In my reply to Mr. Mills I had occasion to consider the duties of the unregenerate, which he spoke so much of, as required of them, and performed by them, while unholy, and under the dominion of sin; and I undertook to prove that such *do not do any duty*, or comply with any of the commands which God hath given to men. Mr. Hemmenway had, not long before, published seven sermons, which were designed to prove and inculcate the contrary doctrine, and were wholly confuted, if I had proved the point I had advanced. This was probably the occasion of his more particularly attending to what I had said in this part of my reply, and undertaking to write against me.

As I am far from being convinced that what he pleads for is agreeable to divine revelation, and look upon it of a very hurtful tendency, I have undertaken an answer. It is thrown into the form of an appendix to the foregoing Inquiry, because what is there said is, in my opinion, a full answer to the leading sentiments and fundamental principles in his piece, so that, by referring to that, the answer may be much shortened.

After having observed that I had not given a right representation of the question in dispute, he proceeds to state it in the following words:* Whether any actions which men do, or can perform, while unregenerate, are required of them in and by any divine command. He asserts, and undertakes to prove, the affirmative of this question, and has wrote a book upon it

* Though Mr. Hemmenway did not choose to dispute the question as I stated it, I yet believe it was stated agreeably to the sense of most of those who have asserted that duties are prescribed in the Word of God, to be done by those who are in a state of unregeneracy; and it will, I believe, appear to be his own sense of the matter, before we have done. But I think it not worth while to enter into a dispute about this, since he owns "the whole drift of my reasoning is to oppose and confute" the affirmative of the question as he has stated it.

of two hundred and twenty-seven pages. If I was to state the question in my own words, I should say it was, whether the unregenerate do any duty which God has commanded. But as Mr. Hemmenway appears to mean nothing different from this by the words he has used, and to understand the real matter in dispute between us, I shall make no exceptions against his statement of the question, but proceed to consider his vindication.*

SECTION I.

The Point in Controversy more particularly stated — The Method Mr. Hemmenway takes to support his Cause — Its Weakness and Fallacy shown.

Mr. Hemmenway agrees with me that the divine commands require holiness, and nothing but holiness, or, "nothing but what is some way included in holiness;" and we are agreed that the unregenerate are wholly destitute of holiness, and that all their exercises and actions are unholy. I supposed the plain and undeniable consequence from these premises was, that they do not obey the divine commands, or do their duty in any degree. Mr. Hemmenway denies this to be a just consequence, and says, "Though no actions of the unregenerate are so fully conformable to the divine command as that they can be denominated holy, in the least degree, yet some actions are conformable to the divine command in some respects, and, therefore, comprehended in the requirement of it." To vindicate this, and answer what has been said in opposition to it, is the professed design of his book.

In order to this, he particularly considers the nature of true holiness, and what is included in this. He says holiness is a very complex thing, containing many parts, all which are necessary to make up that compound, holiness; — therefore, the commands which require holiness, require every part which is involved in the whole; — that the unregenerate may do some of the things contained in this compound, and so far obey the command requiring holiness; though it being but a part, such doings being so defective, have no degree of true holiness; yet in doing this they do their duty, and so far obey the divine command.

To prove that there are some parts of duty and holiness which the unregenerate may perform, and yet be unholy, he divides holiness into principle,

* I have an objection against the title he has given his book, viz., "A Vindication of the Power, Obligation, and Encouragement of the Unregenerate to attend the Means of Grace, against the *Exceptions* of the Rev. Mr. Hopkins." This is not a just title, as it does not tend to give the reader, who casts his eye upon it, a right idea of the matter in dispute, but will unavoidably deceive him, if he knows no more about it than what is said here, for it is really contrary to the truth. I have not made any "exceptions" against the power, obligations, and encouragement of the unregenerate to attend the means of grace, that I know of, but held to all this as fully as he does, and I think more fully, for he does not pretend they have *power* to do this in the manner he contends for, unless they have the assistance of the Spirit of God, whereas I suppose the *secure sinner* has this power; and he acknowledges, I grant, they have *encouragement* to attend on means, and that he has no dispute with me about this. So far, therefore, as his book is to the purpose, the title is a very improper one, if not injurious.

end, manner, and matter.* "All these," he says, "are required, and necessary, in order to render an action truly holy. And though the unregenerate do nothing from a holy principle, in a holy manner, and to a holy end, yet they may do *the matter of duty;* and, in complying with this part of holiness, they so far obey the command requiring holiness, and do their duty." As the whole dispute now turns upon "the matter of duty," it is necessary we should well understand what is meant by this, in order to judge on which side the truth lies.

Mr. Hemmenway has used this phrase often enough, and said a great deal about "the matter of duty;" but, after all, (under favor,) I must think he has not given a clear, consistent account of it. He says it does not mean external actions, aside from the will producing them, but the effective acts of the will, choosing and producing external effects; — that by the substance and matter of an action is meant *the action* as abstracted from all its circumstances, and not any consequent effects distinct from it. Matter of external duty, according to him, "is the act of the will, *ab extra*, productive of an external work required in the divine law;" and this action is to be considered as abstracted from all its circumstances, viz., principle, motive, design, and end.

Upon this I would observe, —

1. There is in nature no such effective act of the will, nor can any such thing be conceived of, as it is self-contradictory. An act of choice, without any motive or design, is just as impossible as an act of choice without an act of choice. Therefore, we may be sure no such action is commanded, or done by the unregenerate or regenerate.

2. If there could be any such actions, there would be no more duty, or any thing of a moral nature, in them, than there is in external conduct considered as abstracted from all acts of choice, or in themselves considered. An act of will, abstracted from all motive and design, if any such thing could be, would have no more morality in it than the wind, or fire, producing effects, and would be no more praiseworthy, or blamable. Mr. Hemmenway is confident that no one "ever dreamed that the mere motion of matter, separate from the agency of the mind, has any morality in it." We might, with as much assurance, assert that no man ever dreamed that the mere motion of the mind, separate from all motive, design, and end, has the least morality in it, had he not furnished us with an instance. He is, however, perhaps, the first, and I hope will be the last.

But Mr. Hemmenway comes out of the clouds before he has done, and appears sensible that matter of duty, done without any motive and design, good or bad, is neither duty nor sin; and grants that any action done with a bad end is "materially evil," that is, not the matter of duty, but the matter of sin. Therefore, it was not the matter of duty, but "vile treachery, in Judas, to kiss his Lord in order to betray him." If the matter of duty was the effective act of the will, abstracted from all circumstances, then Judas did the matter of duty as much as any one can. But, if his end and design cannot be abstracted, but must come into consideration to determine whether he did the matter of duty, or not, and his evil design made it the matter of sin, then a man never does the matter of duty with an evil design, or from a

* Mr. Hemmenway makes many more distinctions, divisions, and subdivisions, in what he says about the nature of holiness, and says a number of things which appear to me very exceptionable; but, as they do not affect the matter in dispute, I shall make no remarks upon them. Let him who understands and approves avail himself of the edification. Wherein we differ in our accounts of holiness will, in some measure, appear from the foregoing Inquiry.

wrong motive; so that the whole comes to this at last. There are certain effective acts of the will, producing effects, *ab extra*, which are either good or evil, matter of duty, or matter of sin, according as the end of the agent is either good or bad. This is very agreeable to common sense. When the beloved disciple John kissed his dear Lord, as a sincere expression of love to him, it was a good action — the matter of duty: when Judas kissed him, with a traitorous design, it was a vile action, and the matter of sin.

Mr. Hemmenway, being sensible of this, notwithstanding all his distinctions about matter of duty, undertakes to show that the unregenerate may act from a good end, and rests his whole cause on this. He says, Though they do not act from the highest and best ends, — which men must act from in order to denominate their actions holy, — yet they may act from self-love, which is not forbidden, but an innocent, useful, and good principle. Therefore, when they do things externally right, from this principle, and seeking their own interest as their end, they so far obey the divine command, and do their duty.

He does not expressly say that I have observed that self-love is commanded, and so a duty. But, if it is not commanded, and so a duty to act from this end, how can acting from self-love make an action a duty, or the matter of duty? or, what obedience is there in this? I do not find that he has told us.

He has *said* self-love is a natural, innocent, and good principle; but I do not find that he has offered any evidence of this, or that there is any thing to support it but his bare assertion. This, surely, ought not to be taken for granted, since he builds all his opposition to me on this foundation. If self-love is not a good or innocent affection, but forbidden and sinful in every degree of it, all his building falls to the ground, and his "matter of duty," done by the unregenerate, turns out to be the matter of sin. This I have endeavored to make evident in the preceding Inquiry; and I think I have a right to consider it as a full answer to the whole he has said in proof of the doctrines he has advanced, till it be shown that I have not given a right account of holiness and self-love. I, therefore, refer him and the reader to that, hoping it may be the means of such light to him, and all who attend to this controversy, as shall put an end to the dispute.*

SECTION II.

Remarks on Mr. Hemmenway's particular Arguments to prove his Point.

Our author attempts a particular proof of his positions by *nine* arguments, which are so enlarged as to take up above a hundred pages. I shall not take notice of many particulars in these pages, which I think might be easily shown to be very exceptionable; nor is there need of a particular answer to

* Mr. Hemmenway's dividing and splitting up holiness into so many parts, in order to find something belonging to it to be duty for the unregenerate to do, has brought to mind the following similitude, which may serve to illustrate it: A certain debtor owed his creditor a thousand dollars; but, instead of paying him the real dollars, which he was able to do at any hour, had he been inclined, he brought to him an equal number of counterfeit dollars, and pleaded he had paid the debt, and answered his obligation, in part, at least, as there are several things in counterfeit dollars which belong to true dollars, such as external appearance, shape, etc., though they want the most essential thing, and are not true silver; and though he had no regard to his creditor and his

such of his arguments as are built wholly on the foundation he has laid, which has been particularly considered in the preceding section, and shown not to have any sufficient support.

His first argument is expressly built wholly on this, and is sufficiently confuted by observing the unregenerate do not the matter of duty, if self-love is not a good thing, but sin, and that so far as men act from this, they act not for a good end, but a bad one, the opposite to which he has not proved, but rather begged. There is one passage, however, in these pages which

interest, yet he acted from the *innocent* principle of self-love, as he did it in hopes that hereby he should escape being cast into prison.

Mr. Hemmenway undertakes to confute a position, — which he says I "often lay down, and build much upon it, without once offering any thing in the shape of an argument to prove it, — that *the unregenerate act wholly from self-love.*" It may be proper to take some notice of this. I grant the unregenerate have appetites and tastes which are not self-love, but quite distinct from it, such as animal appetites, hunger, thirst, etc.; and such are a taste for natural beauty, and what is called natural affection, etc. But these are not of a moral kind, and, therefore, man's moral agency does not consist in these; and if he had no other affections and principles of action, he would be no more a moral agent than the beasts. Therefore, when we speak of man's *moral* actions, it is not proper to say he acts merely from these appetites and instincts; but must find some other principles of action. Mr. Hemmenway says, "By moral actions I mean such as are commanded, or forbidden, by the divine law." But these instincts and appetites are neither commanded nor forbidden in the divine law; therefore, there is no moral agency in them, in themselves considered. Though these may have influence in moral actions many ways, yet the morality of them does not consist in these, but in universal benevolence, or self-love, one of which is implied in every moral action, and determines it; and in this the moral good, or evil, of every action wholly consists. For instance, if a man determines to gratify any particular bodily appetite, or not to do it, as a moral agent, he does this in the exercise of self-love, or universal benevolence; and, therefore, all his moral actions are determined by benevolence, or self-love — a regard to others, which includes a regard to himself, or that regard to himself only, which is selfishness.

Mr. Hemmenway gives a different account, indeed. He thinks because "men often, in their actions, follow the impulse of particular instincts, or appetites, in opposition to their own interest, on the whole, — yea, in opposition to what reason declares to be best, or most for their happiness, taking in the whole of their duration," — it follows that they not only do not act from self-love in such instances, but directly contrary to its dictates. The fallacy of his argument is easily detected. Self-love never prompts men to that which is, on the whole, most for their happiness, but to the contrary, and, therefore, to choose and act contrary to the judgment, and determines men to do that which their reason dictates not to be for their greatest happiness, the whole of their duration considered. Reason may dictate that the only way for a person to be truly happy is to be benevolent, and devoted to the greatest good of the whole. If any one should hence infer that self-love will influence such a person to seek the general good in a disinterested way, and that not to do this would be to act contrary to self-love, he would argue as well as Mr. Hemmenway does. But I need say nothing to show the weakness and self-contradiction of such an argument. He is led, by his way of arguing, to the following conclusion: "The disorders and miseries which abound in the world, through the wickedness of men, are perhaps chiefly owing to the inordinate strength of particular appetites and inclinations, ungoverned by a regard to their own general good." According to this, self-love is so far from being sin, or tending to it, that the wickedness of men is chiefly owing to the want of self-love, or the weakness of it; and if this took place to a sufficient degree, so as to govern men, there would be very little wickedness among men, if any, even

requires particular attention. He says, "When he (meaning myself) says that the unregenerate in attending the externals of religion do nothing that is their duty, he considers these things as enjoined on men only on supposition that they are regenerate, and have a holy love to God; for he says, they are required only as expressions of love to God." From this he draws four frightful consequences, and says, "I could easily go on further, but I forbear. Methinks these consequences are so intolerable that no principle ought to be admitted, from which they are fairly deduced. If they can fairly be avoided on Mr. H.'s plan, let it be shown."

though they had no love to God or their neighbor! How different this account of self-love is from that given in the preceding Inquiry, (Sect. IV. p. 22, etc.,) every intelligent reader will see, and will judge for himself which is most agreeable to Scripture, reason, and experience.

Mr. Hemmenway has attempted, by several arguments, to prove that the unregenerate have love to *persons*, distinct from self-love, which may influence them to wish them well, do them good, etc. He says, "If the unregenerate act merely from self-love, then we are under no obligations of gratitude to them for any acts of kindness they may do us. But this is a consequence not to be endured, which at one stroke cancels all obligations of gratitude to parents, friends, and benefactors, for all favors and kindnesses, if they are unregenerate."

Ans. 1. We are under obligations of gratitude to others for the kindness they show us, so far as there is an appearance of kindness, which ought to affect us as such. Where there is an appearance of kindness, we ought to be affected with it as such, unless there be as great and sensible appearance of something to the contrary, or of no kindness intended, sufficient to counterbalance it. And in such a case there is, on the whole, no appearance of kindness. When an unregenerate man shows us kindness, there is commonly a more sensible appearance of kindness than of any thing to the contrary. The act of kindness is generally, if not always, more apparent and certain than his unregeneracy. And if we could be as certain he is unregenerate, — yet that this is the character of all the unregenerate, — and, therefore, this is really his character, and he has no real disinterested good will to us, consequently it is not really an act of kindness, however kind he may appear to be, we get the evidence of all this by a course of reasoning, and a number of deductions, which cannot affect our minds so much as the appearance of good will in the kindness shown, therefore the latter ought to preponderate in our minds, and affect us most, and produce feelings and exercises answerable. Therefore there is in such cases an obligation to gratitude. If Mr. Hemmenway, or any other person, is not satisfied with this solution, let him account for our Savior's weeping over Jerusalem in any other way, or the child's being grieved at the pain and trouble of his parent, while he verily believes it will all work for his good, and that he will be unspeakably more happy, on the whole, than he could be without it.

Ans. 2. Let it be remembered the unregenerate have no true gratitude to benefactors. They are not pleased with disinterested good will for its own sake. All their gratitude consists in self-love, and a consequent love of those who appear to love them. Whatever obligations they are under to gratitude for disinterested kindness, they never fulfil them, nor are influenced by them, more than if they did not exist.

The regenerate or benevolent are thankful to God for all the benefits they receive by the hands of men; and if they have the most clear and sensible evidence that these act wholly from self-love, they will love them, and do them all the good they can. In this view, the consequence which Mr. Hemmenway dreads does not appear so intolerable.

Mr. Hemmenway further says, "That love the unregenerate have sometimes to others cannot possibly be educed from self-love. It is evident that the unregenerate have sometimes such a love to others as causes them to have a real

Answer. This is all a misrepresentation. I do not say that the attending on the externals of religion, or any thing else, is enjoined on men, only on supposition they have a holy love to God. I say God requires all men to love him with all their hearts, which they do not, unless they express it in all proper ways, in a proper attendance on the externals of religion. This command is absolute, without any supposition that they are regenerate. I say, they who have no love to God really do no duty when they attend on the externals of religion. And if they cannot do this without a pretence and profession of doing duty, and of love to God, then his consequences will

pleasure in, and concern for, their welfare, separate from all hopes or prospects of being benefited by them," which could not be if they loved others only for their own sakes, or wholly from self-love. He instances in one dying, and yet manifesting concern for the welfare of his friends after he is dead, which can be of no benefit to him.

Answer. There is not the least difficulty in accounting for this from self-love. Self-love will lead men to love others and wish them well, for the good *they have done* to them, as well as for the good they expect they will do to them Therefore this will influence a man to wish well to another who has been, and is now, his friend, though, because he is now going out of the world, he does not expect to receive any future benefit from him. Self-love does in a sense unite us to them who love us, and do us good, and leads us by a necessary association of ideas to look on them as belonging to us, and as part of ourselves. Hence there is a desire in selfish men, which arises from self-love, to exist after they are dead, in their surviving friend or relations, which they look upon in some sense as themselves. And hence they are disposed to wish and provide for their existence and comfort after they themselves shall be dead, for the same reason they would do this for themselves, if they were to live, viz., from love to themselves.

Mr. Hemmenway says, "More arguments might be offered to the same purpose." If they are no more to the purpose than those he has mentioned, it is to be hoped he will never be at the pains. However, it is to be observed, if he had proved that the unregenerate do not act wholly from self-love, it would answer no end in his dispute with me, for he does not make use of this at all to prove his point, but, as has been observed, does this wholly by self-love. Indeed, he does not pretend that the love to others in the unregenerate, which he contends does not spring from self-love, is more virtuous, or in any respect better, than self-love, and says, "It will not follow from any thing that has been pleaded for, that mankind have naturally a principle of true holiness." He will, however, be put to difficulty to *prove* this, I believe. If disinterested benevolence to our fellow-men is not of the nature of holiness, and in its nature universal benevolence, and does not imply a friendly regard to God, and supreme love to him, it will be impossible to tell, I believe, what holiness is. Therefore Mr. Edwards, to whom Mr. Hemmenway had reference here, did, with good reason, suppose if it could be made evident that men naturally have disinterested benevolence to others, it must be granted they are are naturally virtuous and holy. See his Nature of True Virtue, Chap. IV. Mr. Hemmenway adds, "Nor does it enervate the proofs of man's natural depravity from Scripture and experience." This, with the whole of his scheme, is doubtless inconsistent with man's total depravity, which the Scripture asserts, and in this view is not only false, but of a most destructive tendency. The Scripture represents the natural depravity of men as rendering them hateful and hating one another, (Titus iii. 3,) and says love and good will to others is of God, and none have this but they who are born of God. (1 John iv. 7.) Moreover, the Scripture says of men, in their natural state, "They are altogether become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." (Rom. iii. 12.) Their "mind is enmity against God; is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be." (Rom. viii. 7.) That "every imagination of the thoughts of their heart is only evil continually." (Gen. vi. 5.)

follow. But till he shall *prove* this, they can be as fairly avoided and as safely denied on my plan as on his own.

His second argument is taken from a passage in Mark, parallel to that in Matthew, where our Savior gives a summary of the divine law, from which I thought I had proved that they who do not love God or their neighbors do no duty. As what he says here is chiefly to obviate and confute the sense in which I understood these words of Christ, I shall leave the particular consideration of this argument to another place.*

Mr. Hemmenway's third argument is taken from Rom. ii. 14. "For when the Gentiles which have not the law do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves." Here the Gentiles, whom he concludes all will allow to be unregenerate, are expressly said to do the things contained in the law; therefore the unregenerate may obey the law and do their duty in some instances.

Ans. 1. If the apostle is speaking of the heathen, the words taken in their connection will prove that the heathen by nature do those things by which they shall be justified. This will suit the gross Pelagians, and they have improved them to this purpose, as Mr. Hemmenway observes, but this will prove too much for him, I conclude. The apostle, in the verse immediately preceding, says the doers of the law shall be justified, and then these words come in, "for when the Gentiles do the things contained in the law," that is, are doers of the law. It would be doing violence to these words to suppose that doing the law in the former clause means one thing, and doing the things of the law in the next, which is connected with the former by the illative particle *for*, means quite another thing. Therefore, if the doers of the law shall be justified, and the heathen do the law, they shall be justified and saved, whether they are regenerate, or ever hear of Christ and the gospel, or not. Mr. Hemmenway argues that, since the same word is used in each of these verses, it must mean the same thing; and this, I think, is the most weighty reason he gives against Mr. Glass's sense of the words.† He says, "It ought not to be supposed, without evident reason, that the apostle should immediately use the same word, in effect, to express a meaning entirely diverse." If he does not, he speaks of such a doing of the things contained in the law, which is connected with justification and salvation, for of such doings he speaks in the sentence immediately before.

Ans. 2. Some have supposed the apostle is here and in the preceding verses speaking of that doing the things of the law by which they who did them should live, and is explaining what he afterwards says is the tenor of

* I would, however, just observe that, under this argument, he asserts, and thinks he proves, "that an attendance on religious ordinances is enjoined on men by other commands than those which enjoin holy love." This is a different and contrary strain from that in which he sets out; for, in the beginning of his book, he is ready to allow there is no command that does not require holiness, and says I have stated the question wrong in saying it is, "whether there are any commands given to the unregenerate, which do not require any thing truly holy, but only require such exercises as have not the nature of true holiness." But he seems to have forgotten all this now, and asserts the affirmative of this question, and what is directly contrary to what he had granted. For if there are "other commands than those which enjoin holy love," then there are commands which do not enjoin holiness, or any thing truly holy, since he grants there is nothing truly holy, where there is no holy love.

† Mr. Glass observes that the words in the original, rendered, *do the things of the law*, might more properly be rendered, *do the offices of the law;* i. e., their own consciences dictate to them what is right, and condemn or justify, by which they are a law unto themselves.

law. "For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, that the man which doth those things shall live by them." That he speaks of keeping the law in the sense in which the Jews generally understood it, as the way to life, and observes that on this footing the Gentiles stood as fair a chance for life as the Jews, if they were doers of the law, by a patient continuance in well doing. Yea, while such Gentiles were saved, the Jew who heard the law, and did not keep it, would certainly perish. That he says this only to convince the Jews of their error, without supposing that any one, Jew or Gentile, ever did or will do the things contained in the law, which if a man do, he shall live in them. This sense is much preferable to that which represents the heathen as actually doing those things by which they shall be saved, without any knowledge of Christ and the gospel. But there are objections against this sense, which I stay not now to mention, but proceed to another, which to me is the most natural and easy.

Ans. 3. The apostle is not here speaking of unconverted heathens, but of such doing the things contained in the law as is implied in embracing the gospel, or in the character of a Christian, which, in the preceding context, he calls a patient continuing in well doing and working good. And this is agreeable to our Savior's account of the matter. (Matt. vii. 21, and on.) And St. James describes the true Christian in the same manner: "But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed." (James i. 25.)

The words following confirm this sense, in which these Gentiles are said to show the work of the law written in their hearts, i. e., discover, by their precession and conduct, the law written on their hearts. But this is spoken of as the character of God's people, as the effect of God's power, and a blessing peculiar to the covenant of grace. (Jer. xxxi. 33. Heb. viii. 10.)

The passage under consideration might, consistent with the original, be rendered thus: "For when the Gentiles, who by nature have not the law, do the things contained in the law." The word translated *by nature* being used to denote their natural state, by birth and education, by which they are distinguished from the Jews, and not what they did by the force of mere nature. We have an expression parallel to this in the twenty-seventh verse, where the same word is used: "And shall not uncircumcision, which is by nature, if it fulfil the law," etc. This phrase means the same with that under consideration,—"The Gentiles, who *by nature* are without law." * And he is here evidently speaking of the same thing: to fulfil the law is the same with doing the things contained in the law. And he goes on to show what this is, to the end of the chapter, viz., that it is nothing merely external, but belongs to the heart. But none will suppose this character belongs to the unconverted Gentiles. He speaks of the same Gentiles in the following parts of this epistle: "Even us whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles. What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness." (Rom. ix. 24–30; see also x. 12, etc.; xv. 18.)

The Jews were greatly prejudiced against the Gentiles being received as the people of God, without being circumcised, and becoming Jews by submitting to their law in every particular. They said to the Gentiles, "Except ye be circumcised, after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved; that it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses." (Acts xv. 1–5.) The apostles themselves had the same prejudices at first. And when Peter came to understand the truth, he said, "Of a truth,

* When St. Paul distinguishes the Jews from the Gentiles, he uses the same word — "We who are Jews by nature." (Gal. ii. 15.) In opposition to this, the Gentiles were by nature distinguished from the Jews.

I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation, he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." (Acts x. 34–38.) This is the truth Paul is vindicating in this chapter, and laboring to convince and confute the opposing Jews. This might be more fully shown, had I room.

It will perhaps be objected, that the last clause of the verse seems inconsistent with the Gentiles here spoken of being Christians: "These having not the law, are a law unto themselves." Gentile converts had the law as much as the Jews.

Answer. They had not the law in the sense in which the Jews had it. It was not given to them as it was to the Jews, nor in this sense binding on them. Therefore, in the sense in which the Jew had the law, as a Jew, the Gentile had it not, but was without law, and continued so after he was converted to Christianity. And by voluntarily improving the revelation of the moral law, made to the Jews, being approved by his own reason and conscience, for his own instruction, conviction, and practice, he was a law unto himself. This sense of the words has been mentioned by Augustine and others, as may be seen in *Poli Syn., in loc.*, though Mr. Hemmenway thought not fit to take any notice of it. This sense is consistent with the whole Bible, and particularly with its being said of all men by nature, "There is none that doeth good, no, not one,"—which cannot be easily reconciled with their doing by nature the things contained in the law, and being such doers of the law as shall be justified. Mr. Hemmenway must prove this cannot be the sense of the text before his argument from it will be of any service to him.

His three next arguments, viz., from its being said of Herod, that when he heard John, he did many things, (Mark vi. 20;) from Paul's exhorting the Christians at Philippi to practise whatever things are true, honest, etc., (Phil. iv. 8;) and "from divers testimonies from the Old Testament, manifesting God's approbation or favorable notice of the actions of unsanctified men, when for the substance conformable to his will," are not so different as to require a distinct answer to each of them.

The general answer is, whatever men do from an evil principle, or for a forbidden end, is not duty in any sense, but sin. "No man may do any acts of religious obedience for such ends as are simply and absolutely unlawful. Such sacrifices are in a peculiar sense an abomination to the Lord."* Mr. Hemmenway grants the unregenerate act from no higher or better principle than self-love, and have no better end than this sets up. But this is a sinful principle, and always pursues a wrong and bad end. Consequently, such really do no duty. Therefore, if he cannot prove that self-love is an innocent and good affection, there must be some fallacy in all his arguments from these Scriptures, or any others in favor of the unregenerate doing any part of their duty; especially their doing that which is worthy of God's approbation and favorable notice.

It is said, that Herod did many things; but not that he did any duty, or one thing, as John directed him to do it. John directed him to repent, and express his repentance by acts of righteousness and mercy; and if he had two coats, to give one to him that had none. (Luke iii. 8–14.) If Herod gave a coat to the poor from self-love, he acted from no better principle or higher end than he did in depriving his brother of his wife, and ordering John to be put to death. Selfishness and pride governed him in the former, as well as in the latter. He was the same man, acted from the same principle, and had the same end in view, in each of these actions.

His argument from Paul's directing Christians to practise whatsoever things are true, etc., is indeed somewhat remarkable. He says, "I have not cited it because straitened for proofs." None will imagine he can be straitened

* Hemmenway's Sermon.

for proofs, who thinks this text to be one. Every command in the Bible might be as "pertinently cited" as this. Christ's command to his disciples, "Bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you," is full as pertinent; for the unregenerate can do this, so far as it consists in externals, as well as speak the truth, and do whatsoever things are lovely. And, indeed, this implies what our Savior enjoins; for a kind behavior towards our enemies is one of these lovely things. But I believe Mr. Hemmenway will not say that they whose character is *hating one another* — hating those that hate them — do ever bless their enemies, according to the command of Christ. For when they bless with their mouth, their heart is full of cursing and bitterness. And he insists, as has been observed, that whatever is done for a bad end, is not duty. Men may bless their enemies to gratify their ill will against them; but this is not doing the matter of duty, he grants. And they who bless them from no higher principle than self-love, always do it from ill will; for self-love is always and necessarily ill will to enemies. In a word, Mr. Hemmenway's argument from this text takes its fair appearance wholly from a jingle of words, and a supposition that the unregenerate may speak the truth, not for a bad, but a good end, which he has not yet proved.

The truth of the matter is plainly this: There are certain external actions in words and conduct, which are the fruit of volition, or an expression of the heart, acting out in these ways. Such of these as are the proper expression of love to God and our neighbor, or universal benevolence, are put for the whole; the external sign or effect, which alone is seen by men, is mentioned and spoken of as including the whole. Therefore, these are mentioned in the command, and are commanded, as comprehending the whole. And when these effects are produced by men, they are said to do the things that were commanded, the whole being implied, unless there be an express exception. Therefore, when only something external is mentioned in the command, and this is complied with and done, men are said to do as they are commanded in Scripture, and in common language among men, where none imagine that nothing is intended but the external thing which is mentioned. This I take to be a full solution of all the seeming difficulty in all the passages of Scripture Mr. Hemmenway mentions, or that can be found, where only external actions are mentioned in the command, and men are said to do as they were commanded, when they did the external thing mentioned in the command. Mr. Hemmenway supposes the effective act of the will is implied, when only something external is mentioned; and we have as good authority to say the motives and design of the agent are implied; for these are as essential to every effective act of the will as is this effective act to the external effect, and more so; for the external effect may take place where there is no act of the will, whereas there can be no effective act of the will without motive and design.

The whole, therefore, comes to this: There are certain external things which are the proper expression of love to God and our neighbor, and by which the greatest good of the whole is promoted. These are therefore commanded.*

* Our author says, "The highest good of the universe is the original reason and foundation of the divine law." This, therefore, must be the design of every particular command. And when any particular external action is commanded, it is supposed it must be done with a design to answer this end, which is the great end of all laws. And if the external action mentioned in the command is done with a contrary view and design, there is no obedience to the command, but it is nothing but disobedience. But this is true of all who act wholly from self-love. No affection but universal benevolence agrees to the highest good of the universe. Self-love does always necessarily oppose it. Therefore, he does not obey any command who has no universal benevolence. See the preceding Inquiry.

And when the command is complied with, and the external thing is done with a right view and design, i. e., with a disposition to promote the general good, it is matter of duty; but if it be done with a bad design, and from a contrary motive, viz., to set up self in opposition to the general good, it is not matter of duty, but matter of sin.

With respect to what is said of God's manifesting his approbation of the doings of wicked men, and taking a favorable notice of them, out of respect to what they did, in the case of Ahab, Jehu, etc., I said, in my reply to Mr. Mills, God did not conduct in these instances as a searcher of hearts, but in what he said of them, and his conduct towards them, had respect to their present external appearance, profession, and conduct, i. e., as if they really were what they professed to be, true penitents.

Mr. Hemmenway demands "direct and positive Scripture evidence of this hypothesis," and says, "Of this, according to my best observation, his book affords nothing." *Answer.* I mentioned two passages of Scripture, — Isa. lxiii. 8–10; Ps. lxxviii. 36, — which I thought amounted to a full proof of this. How this paragraph came to escape his observation, I cannot tell. If he observed it, and saw it was not to the purpose, why was he not so kind as to help our ignorance? He adds, "Nor has he told us how it could properly be said of any one, without any respect to his heart, that his heart was or was not perfect and upright, when his behavior was externally right."

Answer. There is no such instance. It is said of Amaziah, that he did that which was right, but not with a perfect heart. (2 Chron. xxv. 2.) But this has reference to what appeared in his external conduct. This was not altogether right, and this discovered that his heart was not perfect. This would not have been said of him if his behavior had been externally right.

I also said, if God granted favors to Ahab, Jehu, etc., out of respect to their repentance and good deeds, and manifested hereby his approbation of their doings, and took this favorable notice of what they did, and favored them because they did so well, while they were considered as having no connection with Christ, and enemies to him, then he might bestow the greatest favors on men, out of respect to their own goodness; and consequently they may be justified by the deeds of the law, which overthrows the gospel, and represents Christ as dead in vain.

To this he says, in the first place, God does in fact grant favors to men who are not believers in Christ, and therefore, if my position is true, he might grant the greatest favors as well, even eternal salvation, had there been no Mediator; so that, according to my way of arguing, a Mediator was not necessary in order to the salvation of men, etc.

Answer. He has wholly overlooked the argument. I do not say it is inconsistent with the gospel for God to grant favors to men, antecedent to their believing in Christ; but that it is inconsistent with the need of atonement for sin by Christ, if men, while unbelievers and enemies to Christ and the atonement, may do those works, by which they obtain God's approbation and favorable notice; for this implies pardon and acceptance, out of respect to their works, and purely for their works' sake; which is the same with being justified by their works. If a man can be approved and accepted of God in his person and works, while he has no union to Christ or faith in him, then he is so far accepted and favored, purely out of respect to his good deeds, and not in the least out of respect to the righteousness and worthiness of Christ. The necessity of Christ's atonement is grounded in man's being in such a state by sin that he cannot have God's approbation and favorable notice, on account of any thing he can do, even though he should become perfectly holy. If he could, Christ's atonement would be needless. There is a wide difference between God's exercising benevolence to men, and his approving and accepting them and their doings, and taking a favorable notice of them because they have done so well. The former is exercised towards men antecedent to their

union to Christ; the latter cannot take place, unless they are actually united to Christ, and interested in his worthiness and righteousness, which alone recommends men to the divine approbation and acceptance in their persons and works; for they are accepted in the beloved. Antecedent to their believing in Christ, they are condemned and accursed, which is inconsistent with their having God's approbation, and his taking a favorable notice of their doings. If men could be thus delivered from the curse by their own doings and righteousness, there was no necessity of Christ's being made a curse, to deliver them from it; therefore, as to such, Christ is dead in vain. (Gal. ii. 21.) Mr. Hemmenway has not said a word to show the defect of this argument, that I have observed.

But he goes on to make another mistake, and upon this says, the very same objections lie against the sense I put on these passages. For if God treated them as if their conduct was right and acceptable to him, having respect only to their external conduct, without searching their hearts, he did this either on account of Christ's mediation, or not. If not, then all the consequences follow from this which I have mentioned as following from his interpretation. If he in this has respect to Christ's mediation, his doctrine is as vindicable on this principle as mine. He concludes thus: "Plainly, then, when he will tell us how it can be reconciled with the divine purity to speak of, and conduct towards sinners, not as the searcher of hearts, but merely according to their visible behavior, and clear his own hypothesis from the consequences he draws from the doctrine he opposes, then I suppose a man of his discernment, or even half an eye, will easily see that the doctrine he opposes may in the same way be as well vindicated."

Answer. God, in treating them, not as the searcher of hearts, but according to their visible profession and conduct, had respect to them, and expressed his approbation of them, considered as interested in the atonement, or as his servants truly devoted to him; which was true, if their hearts were answerable to their external appearance. Since he really accepts and approves of all true penitents, purely for Christ's sake, he visibly approved of them who were visibly penitents, and devoted to him, or appeared to be interested in the atonement.

Mr. Hemmenway has got to show, it will follow from hence, that God may as well manifest his approbation of men's characters and doings, considered as impenitents, and not united to Christ. At present, I believe he who has not so much as half an eye is most likely to attempt it. While we treat men according to their visible appearance, we are obliged to take a favorable notice of and love him who professes subjection to Christ, purely for his sake, without knowing his heart, but treating him as if it was answerable to his profession. If any one should hence infer that we may, with as great propriety, manifest the same approbation and love to those who are visibly unbelievers, and bear no particular relation to Christ, he would argue as Mr. Hemmenway does, if he understands my argument. The way is now prepared to see with how much propriety he introduces the following words: "Methinks it is somewhat odd, first to deny and dispute against the fact, viz., that God expresses his approbation of some actions of sinners, and grants temporal rewards to them because of such actions, and then immediately suppose the same fact, and introduce a scheme to account for it, or show it to be consistent with the divine perfections and the truth of the gospel." I at present think it somewhat more than odd that a gentleman of his abilities should be so much in the dark in so plain a case.

I shall finish this head by observing, that in the passages under consideration, and others of the like kind, there is as much evidence from the expressions themselves, that they did the whole of their duty, as that they really did any part of it. And Mr. Hemmenway is very arbitrary, having nothing in these expressions or any where else to warrant him in asserting the meaning

is, that they did the matter of duty. Yea, we are as certain they did not the matter of duty, as he explains it, as that they did not the whole of their duty, when they are said to do as the Lord commanded; for in order to this, according to him, they must do it in a serious, conscientious manner, with a regard to their duty, and under the influence of the Spirit of God, and for ends that are innocent and good. But we have no more reason to think that all the Israelites, or the bigger part, had all this, than that they were all holy. But we are sure they did right, and as the Lord commanded, in appearance, and so far as their external conduct is concerned. Why, then, should we not be content with the plain, obvious sense, though this be consistent with their really doing no duty, but, as their act, may be an act of rebellion?

His seventh argument is taken from sinners having encouragement to attend on means in order to their salvation. He says, it hence follows that this is their duty; for "God never encouraged any one to do that which was not his duty."

Ans. 1. It has been shown that the unregenerate do no duty, according to his own account, if self-love is not an innocent and good thing, but is sin, and so far as men act for the end that proposes, they act wrong. But this we shall conclude to be true, till some evidence that it is not so be produced. Therefore, till he has done this, his own scheme must be considered as involved in all the difficulties he finds in mine. He says, "No one must be encouraged to perform duties for such ends as ought not to be proposed, or cannot be attained." But they who act from self-love only, always act for such ends; therefore ought not to act from self-love. He also says, "God's design in giving these commands (i. e., commands to the unregenerate) are indeed different from theirs in obeying them;" and represents every unconverted man "held by Satan under his dominion," and "walking upon enchanted ground." Consequently, they act for ends which ought not to be proposed, and cannot be obtained, according to his own account. To what, then, are they to be encouraged? What duty do they do, while acting from those ends, which ought not to be proposed, by which they are held under the dominion of Satan, and walk upon enchanted ground? If we strip their actions of all ends, and consider them as doing duty without motive and design, as he sometimes seems to affect to do, we strip them of every thing that is either duty or sin, as has been observed; and that only remains, to which there can be no encouragement; for to talk of encouraging men to do that which involves no motive and design, is a contradiction. When Mr. Hemmenway will make his own scheme consistent with itself, and with his doctrine of encouragement, I trust all the difficulties he has attempted to fasten on mine will be easily removed.

Ans. 2. If it appears from Scripture history and experience that they are most likely to come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved with whom most means are used, and who are most engaged to attend, in a sense of their undone, miserable case, and have the clearest conviction of their true state, etc., then this is a motive and encouragement to men to attend on these means, so far as future misery is an evil, and eternal happiness is a good, in their view, whatever may be their ends in other respects. And if this is all that is meant by encouragement to attend on means, may not a man take this encouragement, and act upon it, without doing any duty? The encouragement in this case does not turn upon the ends he has in view, or the goodness or badness of his exercises and conduct; but upon this plain fact, that persons in such a situation are more likely to be saved than those in another. One takes the encouragement, and is induced to attend, from bad motives and for a wrong end, and does nothing but sin; another is influenced by this fact from the best motives, and does his duty; yet it is encouragement to both of them. It is certain, from experience, this fact affords encouragement to the sinner, who dreads damnation, to attend, though he is conscious he attends as a rebel, with

a heart wholly opposed to God and all his commands. And will it follow that God encourages him in his rebellion?

Mr. Hemmenway says, "It will be impossible to convince those, who view things in any measure as they are, that such a conduct as is not their duty has any probable tendency to promote their final interest." It is granted, such conduct has no tendency in itself to promote their salvation. The ground of hope, in this case, is entirely in what God does, many times overruling it so as to issue in their salvation. It is impossible for Mr. Hemmenway to prove that a person, sensible that he does no duty, whether he attends on means or not, may not be induced to attend, as the only hopeful way of escaping the evil he dreads; for this is not only contrary to reason, but to many known facts. Many who are convinced they do no duty, but that all the exercises of their hearts are a constant series of horrid rebellion against God, are engaged to attend on means as the most likely way to escape the damnation they dread. And it appears from fact, that the more fully a sinner is convinced that his heart constantly opposes God, and the more he feels the misery of his case, the more engaged he will be in attending on means. And if such could be made to believe that there was no hope for them, but in the way of doing duty, they would sit down in absolute despair.

His eighth argument, which he says is an important one, now offers itself. This is taken from "the ends for which the ordinances of the gospel were instituted." He says, "Such an attendance to duties as unregenerate sinners are capable of, may and does answer some of those ends for which these duties were enjoined. Therefore, such obedience is enjoined in and by them."

Ans. 1. Though God's ends are answered by his commands, and the sinner's attendance on means, and it is sometimes made the occasion of good to him, yet it does not follow that the sinner does any duty. He says the sinner is under the dominion of Satan in all he does, and his ends are different from God's in his institutions and commands. The sinner's exercises and exertions have no tendency, in themselves, to answer any good end. They are all evil, and tend to evil, being opposition to the divine authority and command. When they issue in saving good to the sinner, it is wholly owing to the interposing, overruling hand of God. The sinner, in all his exertions under awakenings and convictions of conscience, while under the dominion of Satan, is more like a wild bull in a net than a submissive, obedient child; and would get out of the hands of God if he could, and all his strivings are really strivings against God, as they are utterly opposed to submission to him; like the exertions of a wild beast, untamed, unsubdued, in the hands of him who is taking methods to bring him to submission. God uses means with the sinner suited to bring him to submission, and is pleased to cause them to be successful in some instances; but till the sinner submits he does not comply with God's design, but acts like a rebel in all his exertions. This is the Scripture account of the matter. "The carnal mind is enmity against God. Every one that doeth evil hateth the light." (John iii. 20.) "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." (Matt. xii. 30.)*

Ans. 2. It is granted that God's institutions and commands have a

Mr. Hemmenway speaks of the sinner's waiting on God in the way of his blessing, and of his endeavors of obedience. But surely the Scripture will not warrant him to apply these expressions to the doings of the unregenerate. They only tend to blind and deceive. Endeavors of obedience suppose the heart is gained, and friendly to God and his commands. And to wait on God, does in Scripture denote faith and trust in him, and promises are made to this. Does the unsubdued rebel — the carnal mind which is enmity against God — ever do this?

tendency to influence the unregenerate, and are designed and used to promote what is called a preparatory work in them; but it does not follow that they, while unregenerate, obey any of these injunctions and commands. Our author says, "The hearers of the gospel are to be immediately called to believe and repent; and these commands and exhortations are to be enforced with a promise of pardon and salvation if they comply, and a threatening of damnation if they remain impenitent." And he adds, "The inculcation of it, by the blessing of God, is a means of good to sinners. The work of conviction and humiliation may, through the influence of the Holy Spirit, be promoted in them. Hereby they are led into a just view of the misery and danger of a state of sin; and are excited earnestly to implore the mercy of God, and diligently to attend on all the appointed means of conversion." If this is the tendency of inculcating these commands, what need is there of preaching up any other duty short of repentance to promote a work of conviction, and lead sinners diligently to attend on means? This will answer all these ends to all intents as well; and, I must add, much better than preaching up duties to be done by them while in a state of enmity with God; for this has no tendency to convince the sinner of his true state, of his sin, misery, and danger, or thoroughly to awaken him to an engagedness in this matter, but the contrary. I appeal to fact and experience. What persons have appeared to have the most just view of their misery and danger, and to be most in earnest in attendance on means? Are they not such as have been convinced that they are wholly rebels; that they are so far from doing any duty, that all they do is sin; and their hearts constantly rise in rebellion against God? When sinners come to this conviction, you cannot persuade them that they do any duty, or keep them from a constant attendance on means. And where these doctrines are preached, and sinners are called upon to repent, and taught that they do no duty while they refuse this, they are as much disposed to be in the use of means as they, at least, who have the contrary doctrine preached to them.

But what is most to the purpose to observe here is, that Mr. Hemmenway has, in this concession, given up the whole of this argument. His argument is, that because the divine commands and institutions are designed to answer ends with respect to the unregenerate, to promote a preparatory work, etc., therefore they must enjoin duty to be done by them while unregenerate. But he here says, all these ends may be answered by calling on them to repent and believe immediately, on pain of damnation; and by this has sapped the whole foundation of his own argument.

Ans. 3. Mr. Hemmenway allows they do no duty, and have not "a next power" to do any of the duties he pleads for, who have not "the inward influence of the Spirit of God." But the institutions and commands of God respect these, as well as those who have the inward influence of the Spirit, and are designed to answer ends with respect to them; and such attendance on means, as they are capable of, may and does sometimes answer these ends, and proves the means of their awakening and salvation. Therefore, such obedience is enjoined in and by gospel institutions. This argument is built on the same ground on which his stands, but he will not allow it to be good; consequently must allow us, and ought himself, to have as poor an opinion of his own.

There is something to be done with a sinner, antecedent to his receiving "the inward influences of the Spirit of God," and as a means of it; and he may do something, viz., read the Bible, and hear the gospel preached. And why is not this as much duty as any thing the sinner does, who has the inward influences of the Spirit, according to his argument? Therefore, it proves too much; even what he says is not true; and so proves nothing at all.

He probably made this distinction, and expressly excluded all who have not the inward influences of the Spirit from doing any duty, because it would

be not a little shocking to represent the openly profane person as doing the matter of duty, when he puts on a serious face for an hour in hearing a sermon, while his heart is as much given to profaneness as ever, and his design is to improve what he hears to the vilest purposes. But they who judge not according to the appearance, but righteous judgment, according to the standard of truth, and look on every unregenerate heart full of nothing but thoughts and imaginations which are wholly evil continually; of cursing and bitterness; of enmity against God; deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; will be as far from admitting that such do any duty, as he is that any duty is done by the secure and profane. And though he may think it very uncharitable, I am confident that if he had constantly viewed the unregenerate in this scriptural light, his two books, wrote to prove and inculcate unregenerate duties, never would have existed. But it is to be observed that he often forgets this distinction, as well he might, since it is so arbitrary, and represents those as doing duty who can have no pretence to the Spirit of God, more than all men on earth, even the whole host of Israel, and the mixed multitude at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness; though he says God at the same time "knew that they were a rebellious generation." And he says the multitude of the Jews did their duty in sitting down to eat, though they were a stupid, carnal generation, and followed Christ only for the loaves. And his description of the matter of duty in many places is suited to the doings of the most profligate wretch in the kingdom, though at other times, in contradiction to himself, he expressly excludes such from doing any duty.

"This leads me to observe," he says, "when Christ directed the Jews to search the Scriptures, he must mean a study of the Scriptures by the unregenerate, in order to conversion, or their receiving the Holy Spirit in his sanctifying influences, because they were then unregenerate. But upon the same ground, I may say, he means a search of the Scriptures which men may practise before they have "the inward influences of the Spirit of God," for these Jews had not the Spirit in this sense; and must they wait and do nothing till the Spirit came upon them? Was it not their duty to search the Scriptures, in order to obtain the influences of the Spirit? And did Christ direct them to study the Scriptures only on supposition they had the Spirit? If he directed them to that search of the Scriptures, which they could not perform till they had the inward influences of the Spirit, which they were then wholly without, why might he not as well mean such a study of them as implied the Holy Spirit in his sanctifying influences? Was not the latter as much in their reach as the former? And are not God's institutions and commands as much calculated and designed to bring men to the former as to the latter? When he will solve these difficulties, and answer these questions, on his own principles, we may safely promise a full answer to all he says on this head, from this passage of Scripture, or any other. This, we trust, has been made already.*

* Mr. Hemmenway frequently represents that, upon our plan, the unregenerate are not to be exhorted to do any duty, but only on supposition they are regenerated; and that nothing is their duty in present circumstances. In this view, he says, "Why do any seek to persuade unregenerate sinners that these things are not their duty?" This is a groundless misrepresentation. While we tell them they do no duty so long as they are impenitent, we have duty enough to urge upon them, and that without making any supposition, and which he himself grants is their immediate duty.

But if this representation were just, it might be equally applied to him, and it might be said, he finds no duty for them to do who have not received the inward influences of the Spirit; and they cannot be exhorted to any, only on supposition they have these influences. How they shall know when they have these influences he has not told; and perhaps, if he should try, he would find it

Mr. Hemmenway makes great use of imperfect holiness being prescribed as the means of salvation; and seems to think this quite sufficient to prove his point, and stop the mouth of most objections against him. His argument seems to be this: If the best of men are imperfect, and do but part of their duty in this world, and true repentance and faith, however imperfect, are the appointed means of eternal life, then the doings of the unregenerate are appointed duties, as means of their conversion.

Ans. 1. Real holiness is duty; and he who exerciseth this, though in an imperfect degree, so far does his duty, and no further. But how does it follow from hence that the unregenerate do any duty? or that unholiness is prescribed as duty, or means of any thing? He has not yet made out this consequence, and never will.

Ans. 2. They are required to be perfect in all things; nor is imperfect holiness prescribed by any command. It is, through the grace of the gospel, made a means of salvation, and interests in all the blessings of the covenant of grace; but every injunction and command requires perfect holiness, as much as any degree of it. The lowest degree of holiness is in some degree obedience to the command, though it is not required as thus imperfect; and divine grace pardons the imperfection and sin for Christ's sake, to whom the lowest degree of true faith in him unites the believer. But still, how does it follow from this that what has no degree of holiness is any part of duty, or prescribed as a means of conversion.

Under this argument he undertakes to correct "a notable mistake," which he says I have made in representing that some suppose, and argue from it, as an undeniable maxim, "that whatsoever is said to an impenitent, unregenerate sinner, by way of exhortation or command, can require or propose nothing but what he may do, and yet continue impenitent and unregenerate."* He says, he knows of none to whom this is applicable. And as, from some of my words on this head, he has reason to conclude I had reference to his sermons, he says, "I have mistook his meaning, and concludes I have also mistook the meaning of others."

Ans. 1. I own that when I wrote what he refers to, I did suppose he had taken this for an undoubted maxim in some things he said in his sermons, as well as others in their writings; and I was not alone in this. I was led to this conclusion from his building an argument, for the duties he was pleading for, wholly on this supposition, as I thought. He undertakes to prove that the things which the unregenerate may do, while such, are required of them. And he does this principally by citing a number of Scriptures, in which there are commands to hear, search the Scriptures, pray, etc. And all he says to prove these Scriptures are to his purpose, and require the doings of the unregenerate, is to observe they were spoken to such. Now, if it is not true that nothing but the doings of the unregenerate, or what they may do, while such, is required of them, then these commands, given to the unregenerate, may require not what they do, while such, but what the regenerate only do; so his argument comes to nothing. If I should undertake to prove from Scripture that a profane drunkard was required to pray, while in the midst of his profaneness and cups, and in order to this should produce a Scripture requiring prayer, and only observe this Scripture was addressed to profane drunkards; would not every one see I had not proved my point, unless it was certain that nothing is in Scripture required of such men but what they may do while such? And would they not have a right to conclude I built on this as an undeniable maxim?

much easier to tell, from the Bible, how persons may know whether they have the Spirit in his saving influences, than that they have his influences which are short of it.

* See reply to Mr. Mills.

I knew Mr. Hemmenway offered other arguments, and said many things inconsistent with what I supposed he took for granted here, as the foundation of his argument; yet this was no evidence that he did not here build wholly on the maxim mentioned, nor am I able yet to make any thing of his argument on any other supposition. But since he says this was not his meaning, it must be left to the public to judge, who has made the greatest mistake, he, in writing as he has done, or I, in understanding him as I did.

Ans. 2. Though he has undertaken now to "state the matter plainly, as he understands it," I confess it is not very plain to me, though it may be to others.

1. His argument, as he now states it, proves nothing. The argument is this, if I *now* understand him. There are certain instrumental duties to be done by the unregenerate, and means to be attended upon, in order to conversion. Therefore the Scriptures commanding these things, as what they have a next power to do, bind these duties upon them. Here the whole thing to be proved is still taken for granted, viz., that there are instrumental duties for the unregenerate to do.

2. If his argument proves any thing, it proves too much for himself. If commands to the unregenerate respect all they may do, while such, in attendance on means, and make all this their duty, as they may do it, then they who have not "the inward influences of the Spirit" are hereby bound to duty, which they may do, while in this state, and the argument is as strong for these duties as any other. But he himself grants such do no duty. If his way of arguing does not prove they do, it proves nothing.

3. He, in explaining his argument, gives it all up, as has been observed. For if, as he asserts, commands which the unregenerate never obey, while such, are suited to excite them to all those exertions and attendance on means, and produce all those effects, necessary to take place in order to conversion, and always do this, where they take effect, then the necessity of their attending on means does not infer any command of these things, as they do them, for there is no need of any such command in order to their doing them.

4. He has, I think, in stating this matter *plainly*, said other things *plainly* inconsistent with themselves. He says repeatedly, it is the *present*, the *immediate* duty of the unregenerate to repent and believe the gospel. And yet, in the midst of all this, he asserts "God has not enjoined on any the impracticable task of exercising supernatural powers or principles, before they are furnished with them, as the means of obtaining any blessings, temporal or spiritual. To prescribe impossible means would be the same thing as to prescribe none. Faith and repentance are means of salvation only to those who are enabled to believe and repent." *

Perhaps I have made another *notable mistake* for Mr. Hemmenway to correct. But if I have not, these are not only inconsistencies, but he has here asserted the very doctrine I had said some held, and was implied in the argument above mentioned, which he represents to be a notable mistake. For according to this, God does not enjoin any thing on the unregenerate in order to their salvation, which they may not do while unregenerate. Upon this ground his argument, from the Scriptures above mentioned, stands good; and we may be sure that whatever the Scripture directs sinners to, in order to salvation, it is something they may do while unregenerate; and I am yet persuaded he in his own mind built on this as an undeniable maxim, when

* Agreeably to this, he in his sermons quotes with approbation the following sentence: "God does not command impossibilities; but in commanding, directs sinners to do what they can, and to seek and endeavor to do what they cannot:" i. e., God does not command the unregenerate to do any thing which they cannot do while such.

he wrote his sermons, though he may now think he did not. His argument is conclusive, on this supposition. And why should he not suppose then what he has asserted now, and that even while he is declaring he holds no such thing?

5. He here asserts a certain connection between what the unregenerate may do, and salvation; which he had repeatedly said we have no warrant to assert from Scripture, and has declared his belief of the contrary. His words are, "God's denying special and effectual grace to those who are favored with the outward means, is a penal consequence of their neglecting to do what they had a next power to do in a way of attendance on means." If so, then none perish who attend on the means as the unregenerate may do. But how does he know this, unless he finds it asserted in the Bible? But if it is asserted there, it is the same with a divine promise of salvation to all who thus attend the means. How then can he say, as he does repeatedly, it cannot be proved there are any promises of salvation to the doings of the unregenerate? *

He concludes by saying, "These observations, it is hoped, may help Mr. Hopkins to understand the principles on which our argument proceeds better than he appears to have done." I confess I am not helped, nor does it appear to me that he well understands himself. But perhaps it will be *plain* to others.

His last argument is this: "The hearers of the gospel are commanded to repent and be converted, that they may be saved; and this infers an obligation on all to attend the means of conversion. Such commands implicitly require whatever is necessary to be done by us, in order to a compliance with them."

Answer. The command to repent does not infer an obligation to attend on the means of conversion in an impenitent way, or with a heart wholly opposed to repentance; nor is this necessary in order to a compliance with the command, unless opposition to the command is implied in the command, and is the means of obedience to it. But the doings of the impenitent are impenitent doings, and wholly opposed to repentance and conversion; therefore, are not implied in the command to repent; so far from this, that they are altogether disobedience to the command." †

I know Mr. Hemmenway will come in here with his *dividers*, and say, impenitence and unbelief "are not required as adjuncts or qualifications of men's attendance on means, but the attendance itself is absolutely required of men." But when he has separated the adjuncts and qualifications of their doings from the attendance itself, there remains nothing to be required or forbidden, that is duty or sin, as has been shown.

* Mr. Hemmenway in his sermons says, "I do not plead for a promise of regeneration to the endeavors of the unconverted." Yet at the same time says the unconverted, "by improving diligently the grace they have received, shall obtain further degrees." And to this purpose applies the words of Christ: "Whosoever hath, (i. e., holds or improves what he hath,) to him shall be given." This is an absolute promise to that improvement here intended. Therefore, if it intends what the unregenerate do, there are promises to the doings of the unregenerate. Moreover, he applies one of the most express promises in the Bible to the unregenerate. (Matt. vii. 7–10.) How these things can be made consistent, I know not.

† This is, I think, sufficient to show I was not guilty of the inconsistence he thinks he finds in what I have wrote on this head. But this is left to the reader.

SECTION III.

A brief Reply to Mr. Hemmenway's Answer to my Arguments, proving the Unregenerate do no Duty.

My first and chief argument to prove the unregenerate do no duty was taken from Matt. xxii. 37–40, and Rom. xiii. 8–10. Christ, mentioning love to God and our neighbor as required in the first and second commands, says, "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." I thought it hence followed that all required in the law and prophets is love; and that this inference was supported and fully asserted by Paul, when he says, "Love is the fulfilling of the law;" and then enumerates a number of commands of the second table, and says, all these, and every other command, are briefly comprehended in this saying, *Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.* Therefore, since the unregenerate do not love God or their neighbor, they do no part of their duty, nor yield the least true obedience to any command.

Mr. Hemmenway is so far from admitting this argument to be conclusive, that he takes much pains to overthrow it, and says these passages will prove directly the contrary. His opposition to the sense I put upon the words of Christ is grounded on the words Mark mentions, as spoken by our Lord with respect to these two commands, viz., "There is none other commandment greater than these." He says this necessarily implies there were other commands besides those which require love.

Answer. He has not proved, nor will he ever do it, that these words imply there are any other commands. Both may be true, that there is no other command greater than these, and that there is no other command which is not comprehended in these. If there is no other command, but these imply the whole, then certainly there is none greater. And it appears, from comparing the evangelists, that our Lord asserted both. First, that there is none greater; and secondly, that in truth these comprehend the whole that is required of man. "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." As if he had said, "There is no other commandment *greater* than these; and indeed these are the whole of the law and the prophets; all depend on these, and they comprise the whole." *

But he further says, "There is nothing in the expression used by our Saviour, 'On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets,' that so much as intimates that every command in divine revelation really requires nothing but true love."

* It is said, "The Lord is greater than all gods." (Ex. xviii. 2.) But who ever supposed this implied that there were other gods besides Jehovah? or that this expression is inconsistent with its being said, "There is no God besides me; we know that an idol is nothing in the world"? Both these assertions are true, though more is asserted in the latter than in the former.

He says, "A part of any thing cannot be called another thing than that in which it is contained." *Answer.* This is a contradiction to his whole scheme. For he says holiness is a compound made up of many parts; and that the matter of duty is a part of holiness; and yet asserts this is another thing than that in which it is contained, viz., unholiness. But it seems he has now altered his plan on which he first set out. Then he allowed there was no command that did not require holiness, and corrected me for stating the question as if this was denied. But now he is proving there are other commands than those which require holiness. "Here I must refresh our author's memory, which seems (not) a little to have failed him."

Ans. 1. If there is any command which does not require love, and is not fulfilled by love, it cannot be said to hang or depend on these two commands, which require nothing but love. Whatever depends wholly on these commands, would be wholly abolished, or cease to be a command, if these commands should cease. But if love, and nothing else, is the fulfilling of every thing required in the law and the prophets, these words are suited to express this. Therefore, this is the sense in which they must be taken, especially as the same thing is asserted in other passages of Scripture, and appears every way reasonable. When Christ says, "Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets," (Matt. vii. 12,) he expresses the same thing with reference only to the second command of love to our neighbor. What is here commanded, all grant, is to love our neighbor as ourselves. And how is this the law and the prophets, unless it be that this is the thing inculcated in the law and prophets; so that he who comes up to this does all required in them, so far as they respect our duty to our neighbor?

And when Paul says, "If I have no love, I am nothing," (1 Cor. xiii. 2,) he expresses the same thing; for how could this be true, if the law and the prophets were any thing aside from love? When Christ says, "He that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings," (John xiv. 24,) what could be a more express declaration, that there is no obedience where there is no love? Mr. Hemmenway, in order to support his scheme, must prove that he who loveth not Christ may keep his sayings. I know that he can easily do this, in the way he proves almost any thing, by his *sensu composito* and *sensu diviso*. But whether he can do it consistently with common sense, let them judge who are willing to make use of it.

Ans. 2. Mr. Hemmenway says, "The love of God and our neighbor is spoken of in Scripture as a kind of summary of the duty of man." He also says, "We do indeed allow that nothing is required as duty, but what is either implied in the affection of love, or is a fit way of exercising and expressing it; nothing which may not be considered as comprehended in love."* In these words, I think, he grants the whole he is disputing against. For if love is a summary of the duty of man, then this comprises the whole of his duty, and he who does not love does no duty. And if nothing is required as duty but what is implied in love, or a fit way of expressing it, or comprehended in it, then that which does not imply love, and is not an expression of it, is not required, and is no duty.

Ans. 3. The apostle's words are so plain and express, that they cannot be evaded. He says love fulfils the law; which could not be true if the law required any thing besides love. He enumerates a number of commands, and says all these, and every other command, is comprehended in that, thou shalt love; therefore love fulfils the law, does all that is commanded.

I have such an opinion of our author's abilities that I do not think he has pleased himself in his attempt to evade the force of this passage. To me it appears so futile and frivolous, as neither to need or deserve an answer. And the boasting flourish he makes in the conclusion, seems rather to be the effect of the weakness of his argument, than the contrary. But of this, "let such as exercise their reason judge."†

* Our author says, "Had our Lord thought that those two commandments contained all, he would have said, There is no other commandments besides these." He here grants they do in truth contain all; and I conclude he will not deny our Lord thought this to be truth. And doubtless he expressed himself perfectly agreeable to this truth, though Mr. Hemmenway thinks it "a gross impropriety of language."

† He says, it plainly appears that there are other duties we owe to our neighbor besides love, from the apostle's own words, "Owe no man any thing,

He says, "It does not appear that love is ever used in so extensive a sense in the Scriptures as to include all those acts of external obedience which flow from it."

ANSWER. Paul says it includes all that is commanded in the divine law, as this is all fulfilled by love; and none, I suppose, will deny that acts of external obedience are commanded. Yea, he particularly mentions a number of commands requiring external obedience, and expressly says, love includes all this obedience. And does not John speak of love as including external acts when he says, "Let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed, and in truth"? (1 John iii. 18.) Is not to love in deed, to love in external action, i. e., in doing acts of love and mercy? Again, he says, "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments." (Chap. v. 3.)

As a further evidence that he who does not love does no duty, nothing that is commanded, I observed, that when the people of Israel appeared by their openly wicked conduct to have no true love to God, they are represented as doing nothing that was required of them, while they attended the temple service, offered sacrifices, etc. God calls all their offerings vain oblations, and says, "Who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?" (Isa. i. 12, 13.)

To this, Mr. Hemmenway says, "We have no reason to think that their attendance on the externals of religious worship is here called an abomination, and what was not required of them, merely or principally because they were unregenerate."

ANSWER. We have reason to be certain this was because they appeared to have no love to God or their neighbor, and discovered themselves to be his enemies, which is true of all the unregenerate, and of no other. To support his observation, he says, "At other times, when the Israelites attended the ordinances of divine worship, there is no hint that what they did was not required of them, but the contrary, it is repeatedly said, they did according to the commandment of the Lord, though they acted not from a principle of true holiness."

ANSWER. At these other times, they put on the appearance and profession of God's people and servants, and were visibly holy; for though they were guilty of gross, open sins, they professed repentance, and reformed, and were again restored to good standing, as in the case of making and worshipping the golden calf. But the people to whom Isaiah speaks refused to reform, though God had been using means with them to this end; therefore appeared to be impenitent enemies to God.

He thinks I have here fallen into a contradiction to myself. I had said, "God, in his conduct towards the people of Israel, and in what he says of them, acted not as the searcher of hearts; but has respect only to their external appearance and conduct." Upon this he observes, "If so, it was not the want of inward holiness that was the cause why their religious performances

but to love one another." Since "the apostle here distinguishes between rendering to all their due, and loving one another, he compares and opposes these different duties to each other." I believe none ever before heard of duties which oppose each other. If there are any such, it is certainly impossible to do them both at the same time; as the one must be a holy duty, and its opposite a sinful duty. The apostle says, the command, Thou shalt not steal, is fulfilled by love. If by this we are commanded to pay our just debts, then it requires us to owe no man any thing; consequently, this is fulfilled by love. How then can these be distinguished as different and opposite duties? This I mention as a specimen of his way of arguing on this head. I think we may borrow his language with propriety here: "Such metaphysical flights are, I believe, beyond the reach of most."

are declared to be an abomination, and not required at their hands, but it was the irregularity of their outward behavior."

Answer. God spake of them and treated them as being his friends or his enemies, i. e., regenerate or unregenerate, according as they appeared in their external conduct. Their outward behavior was not an abomination any further than it proceeded from a wicked heart. Their attendance on religious worship would not have been represented as an abomination, and what God did not require of them, had they not by their wicked works appeared to have no love to God, and to be his enemies, i. e., unregenerate. Had Mr. Hemmenway understood me, or the text under consideration, would he have thought of finding a contradiction here?

But he himself does not seem to be satisfied with what he has yet said; and therefore proceeds to observe, that the sacrifices and offerings which are said not to be required were free-will offerings, which were not commanded. With these they "overcharged God's altars," and for this they were reproved.

Answer. This is a mere conjecture, for which there is not the least foundation in the whole passage; but much to the contrary, as any one may see who will read it. Would any one think of such an expedient to get rid of the text, were he not driven to a strait?

Mr. Hemmenway has an answer to my other arguments; but as most he says consists in making and keeping up his favorite distinction between matter of duty, and the manner, end, and design, and duty in a compound sense and in a divided sense, — which distinctions are, I think, at best unintelligible, and tend to darken, rather than give light, to the subject, — and if this were not true, they are not to the purpose, if self-love is opposed to duty, as has been observed: I say, since this is the case, I shall not trouble myself or the reader with a particular reply, concluding that every one who will attend will see that what I have said is a full reply to all he has offered in answer to these arguments.

SECTION IV.

Brief Remarks on what Mr. Hemmenway says of the Inability of the Unregenerate.

He says, "I agree with our author that the inability of the unregenerate is a sinful defect, nor have I the remotest view or desire to weaken the foundation of this important truth, but rather to confirm it." I have no disposition to call in question his sincerity in this declaration; but I must take leave to think, however, that he has not made it understandingly, and is so far from establishing this important truth, that he has not only weakened the foundation of it, but taken it wholly away, if what he advances be just. Did it not appear in this light, it would not in the least affect the matter in dispute between us, nor should I think it worth while to take any notice of it in any other view. And it is difficult, yea, impossible, to conceive how he should think his representation of this matter was any thing to his purpose; and that he should make the use of it he does, through his whole book, unless he thought the inability of the unregenerate did excuse them, in some measure at least, from obligations to holy exercises, and rendered them less sinful than if they were not the subjects of this defect.*

* He indeed declares he cannot tell or conceive how or why this should be a sinful defect, and that the unregenerate should, notwithstanding their inability, be held bound to do the duty they are unable to do, "is a point attended with vast difficulty, and is perhaps the Gordian knot in revealed religion." How-

He says the unregenerate are under a natural inability to embrace the gospel and be holy, in distinction from a moral inability, it being much more properly called natural than moral. That it is an inability of a different kind from that which consists only in the want of a willingness to do a thing, or opposition of will to it, when this may be removed without putting any new principle into the heart, as in the case of the reformation of a profligate; though he is now unwilling to reform, he may be made willing by persuasion, applying to the principles which he now acts from. Whereas the unregenerate must have a new principle put into their heart, in order to their loving God, embracing the gospel, etc., and their inability consists in their want of this principle, and not properly in the want of a will, and the opposition of their heart to holiness.

I take leave to make the following observations upon this:—

1. If we consult common sense, and the sentiments and feelings of mankind in general, we shall find they make no such distinction between want of a principle or disposition, by which they are prepared and prompted to will and do any thing, and their unwillingness, or opposition of will to it. If persons have natural capacity for any thing which is looked upon in itself right and reasonable, and nothing is wanting but a will, or a compliance of heart, they are always looked upon bound to do it, or to have such a will and choice, and wholly inexcusable for all defects of this kind. And the farther they are from such a choice, and from having any thing in their mind that will be influenced by the motives set before them, the more they are blamed. Nor are mankind wont to form any notion of two different kinds of difficulty or inability in such cases; one consisting in not being willing, while there is a promptitude or an habitual readiness to will, or a good principle; the other, in being wholly without any principle or promptitude to the thing proposed. But when the difficulty lies not in the want of a will, but is such as cannot be removed by any good inclination or choice, and is consistent with having a good will, it is always looked upon to be of quite a different kind, and opposite to the other, as it wholly excuses a person, so far as he is under this inability. Therefore, to call them by the same name would be highly improper, and contrary to common sense.*

2. We do not find the least hint of any such distinction in divine revelation, but this matter is there represented agreeeble to the common notions and sense of mankind. There, as he allows, the unregenerate are represented as being as much bound to perfect holiness as others. Every thing is required of them that is required of others, without making the least allowance for any inability they are under; which could not be, if they were under any natural inability to holiness, or if any thing was wanting but a willing heart.

And the Scripture represents the wicked as under no kind of inability to repent, obey God and embrace the gospel, different from that which they are under to do the common actions of life, when their hearts are opposed to them. Therefore, their readiness to do the latter is often mentioned to show their utter inexcusableness and crime in opposition of heart to the former.

ever, since God in his word declares it to be so, his faith "rests satisfied upon this testimony, without pretending to see through those difficulties." If this declaration is not, in some measure at least, opposed to that mentioned above, I am much mistaken. And how he, or any one else, can, in this view and sense of this matter, feel guilty, and justly condemned to destruction, for not obeying God's law perfectly, and heartily repent of all such defect, as utterly vile and inexcusable, is quite inconceivable. But of this more hereafter.

* He says this inability "is termed by divines, and has not unfitly been called, *ethico-physical*." But he has given no instruction by this hard name, as he has not attempted to explain it. He will not surely pretend it is more scriptural or intelligible than the word moral.

God sets before the Jews the Rechabites' obedience to the command of their father, to illustrate and convince them of their great and inexcusable folly and wickedness in not obeying him. (Jer. xxxv.) And our Lord says to them, "The queen of the south shall rise in judgment with this generation, and condemn them; for she came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here." "Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky, and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time?" (Luke xi. 31; xii. 56.) If they were under a different kind of inability to obey God, repent, and believe the gospel, from that which men are under to obey men, when they have no will to it, how could these similitudes and representations be just? Might not they who were reproved justly reply, "The cases are not similar; the Rechabites had natural principles, which being applied to they might be induced to obey their father; and the queen of the south acted from principles she had; and men discern the face of the sky without having any new principles given to them. But we are wholly without any principles by which we can discern spiritual things and obey the gospel, which must first be implanted in us before we can feel any motive to this. They needed nothing but a will in order to do these things; but we want a power to repent, etc., being under a natural inability. Were it not for this, we would as readily believe and embrace the gospel as men pursue the affairs of this world"?*

3. As Mr. Hemmenway grounds all he says, on this head, on the supposition that there is a holy principle, distinct from all exercise of the heart, and necessary in order to all holy acts of the will, and the cause or ground of them, and that unregeneracy, and the inability of sinners to holy acts of will, consist wholly in the want of this inactive, dormant, holy principle, he ought to have offered some proof of this, on which his argument wholly turns, and which he has taken for granted. Though we should not dare to deny this doctrine of principle, we must not be blamed for not admitting the force of an argument which is built wholly on this, without some positive proof of the existence of such principle, which he has not yet produced.†

* Mr. Hemmenway says, to represent the inability the unregenerate are under to holiness, as consisting in nothing but the want of a will, or to be of the same kind with that which consists only in the want of a will, when they have principles in their hearts, by application to which they may be made willing, is contrary to the language of Scripture; that "the inspired writers assert not only the want of a will, but of power to that which is holy," which is denoted by *cannot*. Christ says, "No man can come to me." And he does not remember that the mere want of willingness is ever signified by such words.

Answer. Peter and John said, "We *cannot* but speak the things which we have seen and heard," when they mean nothing more than want of will, or the opposition of their will to the contrary. Solomon speaks of men to whom God hath given riches, etc., but hath not given them power to eat thereof, meaning, by want of power, nothing but want of a will. If he had remembered such passages as these, he must have been sensible that it is agreeable to the language of Scripture to speak of want of a will, and want of power, as the same thing; and that *cannot* means no more than a strong and fixed opposition of will to a thing, when nothing is wanting but the consent of the heart. The Scripture constantly speaks of sinners' destruction as owing to their *will*, or not willing. "Why *will* ye die!" "Whosoever *will*, let him come."

† Perhaps it will be thought he has proved the necessity of such a principle in order to holy acts in the following words: "The words *power* and *inability* have relation to acts. And in order of nature, power is necessary in order to all acts flowing from it, even as the cause is necessary prior to the effect. To talk of power or inability, whether natural or moral, in any other sense, is unintelligible jargon." In answer to this, and all he says about power, I refer him and the reader to Mr. West's late Essay on Moral Agency, sec. 2. Perhaps, when

It seems to be impossible to have any conception of such a principle. And we seem to run into contradictions in our attempts to describe it. Thus he speaks of it as that by which the mind is biased to act wisely; and he calls it a propensity and promptitude to holy action and the cause of it. At the same time it is to be distinguished from all acts or exercises of the mind, as being perfectly inactive. But how that which does not act can be the cause of action, and how there can be propensity and promptitude to act, while there is not the least activity or inclination one way or the other, cannot be told, it is likely, by any divine or philosopher; and will, after all that can be said, look like a contradiction.

And if the Holy Scripture, when examined with this view, shall be found wholly silent about this principle, nothing being there said that expresses or implies any such thing, it is thought it will be difficult to find any good medium of proof. *

4. Mr. Hemmenway's account of the nature and kind of man's natural inability to exercise holiness and embrace the gospel is not consistent with his being under any obligations to this, or in the least blamable for not being holy. How can he be obliged to do that which he is under a natural inability to do; which defect is not properly a want of will, or opposition of will to holiness, but is what the will has no concern in? He says it is most properly called natural inability. That it is blamable because man has brought this inability on himself by his sin; i. e., Adam had ability to be holy, but lost it for himself and his children; and because he had it, and lost it, they ought to have it, and are now as much to blame for not being holy, as if they had this natural power. But it is impossible to reconcile the reason of a man to this, or to make him feel himself blamable for not doing that for which he has no natural power, even though Adam, or he himself, once had it. All the blame there can be in this case lies in doing that by which this power was lost, and not in not being holy, after he lost his natural power to be so. Mr. Hemmenway owns he cannot account for it that it should be so, and speaks of it as one of the greatest mysteries in all the Bible, but thinks he is obliged to believe it because it is revealed. But this is a mystery of his own making. Blessed be God! there is no such thing revealed in the Bible. Men are there blamed only for that which natural conscience will make them feel they are wholly blamable for, when properly awakened. And there is no mystery in it. Persons of the lowest capacity, and children, may understand it, condemn themselves, and repent. But a person never repents of neglect of that which he thinks he had no natural power to do, and while he can have no conception how or why he should be blamable. While he views things in this light, and his heart is answerable to his speculations, he will not, he cannot, feel himself guilty, even though he thinks divine revelation declares him to be so, and he says he therefore believes it.†

he has well considered this, he will give his own "talk of power" as hard an epithet as he has here used.

* I am sensible I shall, by calling in question Mr. Hemmenway's doctrine about principle, expose myself to his censure, as denying original righteousness and sin. But if it cannot be proved to be inconsistent with Scripture and reason to believe that Adam's holiness first began in holy exercise, and that corrupt exercises take place in his children as soon as they exist as his posterity, of the same nature with those which took place in him when he first sinned, though differing in circumstances, he will not be able to support his charge.

† Our author will perhaps think this an uncharitable censure of him. It would be so, I confess, if his heart necessarily agreed with his doctrine; but as his heart may be, in this respect, better than his head, nothing is censured but his doctrine.

This leads me to take notice of a remarkable instance of my uncharitableness,

Mr. Hemmenway, being sensible that the account President Edwards gives of natural and moral inability, in his Treatise on the Will, is opposed to his scheme, attempts to confute this great author.

He professes to give Mr. Edwards's definition of natural and moral inability,

mentioned by him. I had said, in my reply to Mr. Mills, "The only reason, I conceive, why any have run into this notion of God's appointing duties to the unregenerate, to be done by them while such, and have not rather been shocked at it, is, that they look on them as in some measure, at least, excusable for not loving God and embracing the gospel; this being above their power, and what they cannot do while unregenerate." And I had before published a sermon, in which I said, they who have not been brought to see and feel themselves wholly inexcusable for not being perfectly holy, have not been convinced of sin, as God's people are. These two passages put together, he says, condemn all without exception as unconverted who think God has appointed duties to be done by the unregenerate, while such.

Answer. In my sermon I address myself to my hearers in a use of examination, desiring them to consider what are the exercises and feelings of their own hearts; whether they have been brought to feel themselves wholly to blame for the neglect of every thing God's law requires; or whether they are wont to excuse themselves as not wholly blamable. And I represent the former, not the latter, the character of the Christian. In my reply, I am not attending to a person's sense and feelings of heart of his own blamableness for not loving God, etc., but the views he has of others in a state of unregeneracy. He may, by the influence of education, imbibe wrong notions respecting the blamableness of the unregenerate, and hold principles inconsistent with their being in the least blamable for not being holy, and be led by this to think and talk of the unregenerate as in some measure excusable for not loving God, and yet, when he consults his own heart, and his views and exercises with respect to himself, may find he has no excuse for himself that he is not perfectly holy. This, I charitably believe, is the case in many instances; and in how many, I do not pretend to say. I hope, therefore, to be acquitted from the charge Mr. Hemmenway has laid against me here of the "uncharitable judgment expressed concerning all differing from me in sentiments on this point," of which he says, "I do not remember ever to have met with so hard and extensive a censure." And adds, "This is a sample of the spirit he shows towards all differing from his opinion. The lump is thoroughly fermented with the same sour leaven." Hard, severe, extensive censure, not of my sentiments, but of my spirit.

He says, "That there are some who hold to this notion on reasons different from what is here assigned, he may now inform himself." Where shall I go for information? Not to Mr. Hemmenway; for he declares he cannot see how the unregenerate are blamable for not loving God; as they cannot, being under a natural inability; of which sentiment he makes great use through his whole book.

He does not conclude his note without expressing his charity, as a contrast to my uncharitableness, in the following words: "I can say, with sincerity concerning him, (though he may hereafter twit me with it, as he has done by Mr. Mills in the like case,) I charitably hope that he is a true servant of Christ; though I must add, that Christians would regard him with more complacency, if his discourses savored more of that meekness of wisdom recommended by the apostle. I may not imitate him in his hard censures, for I fear God."

I hope I shall be acquitted from this charge of hard censures by the reader; or, at least, that what I have said will not be looked upon to be inconsistent with my having the fear of God before my eyes, though Mr. Hemmenway, it seems, thinks it to be so.

The following observations offer themselves upon reading this sentence: A true servant of Christ, who does not fear God, if this were possible, is not a character very honorable to him or his master. If it is a hard censure to rank a person among those who do not fear God, and such censures are inconsistent with fearing God, then Mr. Hemmenway, while he is expressing his charity,

but has not done it fairly. He says the first is defined to be "an inability to do a thing, because what is most commonly called nature does not allow of it, or because of some defect or obstacle that is extrinsic to the will." This he cannot understand, because he is "utterly at a loss what is commonly called nature, a word which is observed by a philosopher to bear about a dozen different significations." If, instead of consulting his philosopher, he had read the page preceding Mr. Edwards's definition, where he particularly shows what is commonly meant by nature, he could have been at no loss about the meaning. This looks like perfect quibbling. Besides, he has left out of the definition the words of Mr. Edwards, which are most plain, and serve to fix the meaning beyond dispute. Mr. Edwards's words are, "We are said to be *naturally* unable to do any thing, when we cannot do it if we will, because what is most commonly called nature does not allow of it," etc., i. e., when the difficulty does not lie in the heart or will, but in something else; so that if there was a willing mind, the difficulty would not be removed. What can be plainer than this? And as plain is the following definition of moral inability: "It consists in the opposition or want of inclination;" i. e., all the difficulty or inability lies in this, and nothing is wanting but a willing mind.

Mr. Hemmenway accuses Mr. Edwards of reasoning about moral impotency in a dark manner; but I humbly conceive no more need be said in order to the judicious reader's having full evidence that the darkness lies wholly with him, and that his inability to understand Mr. Edwards is of the *moral* kind. I therefore think it needless to attempt a more particular answer. *

does pronounce a hard censure on him towards whom he is so charitable; and while he is declaring that he fears God, is doing that which he at the same time intimates is inconsistent with it. But all this is left to the reader, wishing there had been no occasion for any thing which is in such a degree personal.

I acknowledge myself greatly defective in meekness of wisdom, and doubt not my discourses would savor more of this had I more of it. Where this defect appears, or that which is contrary to wisdom and humility, as it doubtless does, in some instances at least, I ask the candor and forgiveness of the offended Christian reader. With how much meekness of wisdom Mr. Hemmenway has corrected *my pride* I cheerfully leave to every reader's judgment, as others are better judges of this than I am, and this saves me the trouble of remarking on any thing of this kind; and if I should, different readers will, after all, judge differently. And the point in dispute turns not at all upon this.

* Our author's treatment of what Mr. Edwards says on this head leads me to take notice of something of the same kind in his remarks on a passage in my sermon on Rom. vii. 7. I had said, "The authority of a legislator is exercised and expressed in the threatening to the disobedient, and cannot possibly be expressed in any thing else, or any other way." And in the next paragraph say, "The authority of a law lies wholly in the threatening, or appears and is expressed only in that, as has been just observed." Mr. Hemmenway, to answer his end the better, puts together part of two sentences, taken from two different paragraphs; and then understands the words, "The authority of a law *lies* wholly in the threatening," as meaning that the threatening of the law is all that obliges the subject to obedience, and consequently, if the threatened punishment could be avoided, it would no longer be our duty to obey the law." And this, he says, "is indeed gross Hobbism, the very dregs of Antinomianism."

When I say, "The authority of a law lies wholly in the threatening, or appears and is expressed only in that," I meant by the last part of the sentence to explain the former, and express the same thing in other words. However inaccurate the expression may be, I believe no intelligent, candid reader, who attends to the whole passage, will be likely to mistake my meaning, viz., that the authority of a legislator *appears* and *is expressed* in his law, in the threatening only. But he disputes this, too, and says, "Nor is it true that the authority of the law *appears only* in the threatening." His reason is, "For then the

SECTION V.

On the evil Tendency of Mr. Hemmenway's Book.

Mr. Hemmenway has waived the mention of the "intolerable consequences" which appeared to him to be inseparable from my doctrine, because "it might look too much like uncharitableness to dwell on these things." But it may be questioned whether his charity, in this instance, is according to knowledge. Charity is indeed tender of the person, character, ease, and happiness of every man; but it loves the truth so well, and is so friendly to the general good, that when any one publishes sentiments contrary to important truth, and of a fatal tendency to the souls of men, it will do its utmost to detect the error, point out the danger and evil tendency of it, and give warning to all, how much soever the author's performance and character may suffer by it. Not to do this would be uncharitable and cruel. I shall, therefore, think I am obeying the voice of charity itself in the attempt I am now entering upon. But before I proceed, I give notice that I design not the least intimation that Mr. Hemmenway saw the evil tendency of his scheme, or would desire to promote what I think is the unavoidable consequence of it. But this is so far from being a reason for silence on this head, that it offers a sufficient motive to attempt to open his eyes, and the eyes of all others, who are as far from perceiving the danger as the author.

1. I think what he has said tends to keep out of sight, and hide from men, their real sinfulness and guilt; and therefore opposes one great end of the gift of the Holy Spirit, viz., to reprove or convince the world of sin, as necessary in order to understand and embrace the gospel.

He insists "that sin consists formally and essentially in defect or privation;" that this defect, or want of holy principles, is the true cause of the sinfulness of men's actions. "The corruption of human nature consists essentially and radically in a defect or privation of a principle of true holiness." *

most unrighteous laws may appear to have as much authority or right to command obedience as any."

Answer. What I assert is, that the authority of a legislator cannot be expressed and appear *in his law*, unless there be a threatening to the disobedient. I grant that unrighteous laws may have this appearance and expression of authority, but it does not follow from this that there is any other way to *express* authority *in a law*. He who has authority to make a law must express it in the same way in his law; yet there are mediums aside from the law, in itself considered, by which it may be known whether this expression and appearance of authority in a law is according to truth or not.

He says, "The authority of a lawgiver consists in his right to require obedience *under penalty*." I ask how this right to require obedience under penalty can be expressed in a law which has no penalty, or does not require obedience under penalty? When this question is answered, it will perhaps appear that he has not granted all I have asserted.

* If sin consists originally and essentially in defect, and this defect is the cause of the sinfulness of men's actions, then this defect was the cause of Adam's first sin. I ask, By what means did this defect take place in Adam? Not by his sin, for this defect was the cause of his sin. But he gives a different account of Adam's sin elsewhere. According to him, it consisted in a voluntary act, by which he cast away the perfection and glory of his nature, and "the habit or principle of righteousness was lost," and a usurper was placed on the throne. No sinful defect in his nature, or privation of a principle of holiness, could be the cause of this positive, sinful act, because this act was the cause of this defect, and the loss of the perfection of his nature. And this was

He says the principles and exercises which are naturally found with men are not in themselves sinful, but the sin consists in the want of something else, or their corruption consists in not having supernatural principles joined with them. That self-love is innocent and good in itself, and men never love their own selves too much, or in too high a degree;* and "the viciousness of selfishness consists not at all in the love of ourselves, but wholly in the exclusion of love to others." It is never in any degree sinful, unless when want of love to others has influence in men's actions,† i. e., when a man is induced by self-love to "do that to promote his own interest which is, in his apprehension, inconsistent with the interest of others." So that if a man has no design to injure others, to answer his own ends, and does the matter of duty, his self-love and all he does is as innocent "as the action of a sucking infant that reaches earnestly for the breast." Therefore, all that men are blamable for is want of a principle of love to God and their neighbor. And this being a natural defect, and they under a natural inability, independent of their will and choice, to act from higher principles, and love God, etc., their sinfulness does not lie in this defect, in itself considered, or in any of their neglects or doings, but in their losing their power in Adam; for, according to him, if Adam had not possessed this superior principle and power, and cast it away by his voluntary act, his children could not be under the least obligation to holiness. But that men should now be bound to love God and be perfectly holy, when they have no principles, or natural power to do this, merely because Adam had them and cast them away, he says is the most difficult to be understood and accounted for of any thing contained in the Bible; and if it is believed, it must be merely because it is revealed, and not from any inward consciousness we have of our sinfulness and blame, from any inward sense or feeling, or from our seeing the reason of it; for these unitedly declare, under all imaginable convictions of conscience and illuminations of the mind, there is no sinfulness in that in which all sinfulness and blame do consist, if they are to be found in man.

This scheme of our author does almost, if not wholly, exclude sin and blame from man, in his present state. He whose heart is formed on this plan will feel himself in a great measure innocent, and have little sin to con-

a strange usurper, if it was only negative, a defect or privation, that is, nothing. I think he ought to have given a more clear and consistent account of that sinfulness which consists wholly in defect and privation, (which I take to be the same with its consisting in nothing at all,) and is the cause of the sinfulness of men's actions, before he had made such great use of it as he does in support of his scheme.

* Our author says, "No action is the worse for being interested, or the better for being disinterested. Disinterested mischievousness imports the utmost wickedness. And it was no ways derogatory to our Savior's submission to the will of God in his sufferings, that he endured the cross for the joy that was set before him." These are three as remarkable sentences, perhaps, as were ever put together. Nothing can be more contrary to truth and holiness than the first. The second supposes what is impossible. And so does the last, and is most dishonorable to our Savior, if his pleasing not himself, and his disinterested love, were excellent and honorable. For this, the reader is referred to the preceding inquiry especially.

† Mr. Hemmenway says, "It may seem strange to those who are unacquainted with metaphysics, that a defect or privation should be spoken of as a formal principle, which has an influence in its kind into an action." If he can by his metaphysics prove this, he will at the same time prove what has been often asserted, viz., that men by metaphysics can prove any thing, even the grossest contradictions, to be true. He adds, what all his readers will doubtless believe, "To open this matter fully would carry us too great a length into some abstruse disquisitions."

fess and repent of. This is very agreeable to unsubdued, impenitent, secure sinners, and answers to their views and feelings, and the very scheme they naturally fall into, to excuse and justify themselves. But when the law comes, sin revives, and they die. They find that every imagination of the thoughts of their hearts is only evil continually; that they are abominable and filthy, drinking in iniquity like water; that their heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips; their mouth full of cursing and bitterness; their feet swift to shed blood; being abominable and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate; and their heart full of enmity against God.*

It is doubtless impossible to reconcile this scriptural representation of man's sinfulness with Mr. Hemmenway's scheme. Indeed, he has, through his whole book, kept the sinfulness and guilt of man very much out of sight; and the whole is suited to soothe and please the impenitent, unconvinced sinner, and is opposed to that conviction of sin and humiliation which are implied in a man's knowing his true state and character, and necessary in order to embracing the gospel.†

2. Mr. Hemmenway's book tends to give sinners ease short of Christ; to prevent that humiliation which is implied in embracing the gospel; and flatter and confirm them in that self-righteous way which is most pleasing to their hearts, and in which we have reason to fear multitudes are perishing.

This appears from what has been just observed of his hiding from the sinner his true sinfulness and guilt; for nothing will humble the sinner, and strip him of his confidence in himself, and his self-righteous pleas and attempts, and bring him to feel the utterly helpless, lost state he is in, while his true sinfulness and guilt are hid from his eyes. But our author does more than this. He tells the awakened sinner, he is not wholly a rebel and an

* The carnal mind is enmity against God. This seems to be a difficult text with Mr. Hemmenway, and no wonder, since it is opposed to his whole scheme. He refers to it, and there understands it as meaning a state of unregeneracy, or depraved nature. But in express contradiction to this, he says, "That which is here called enmity is not the carnal heart or depraved nature, but the actual exercise of the heart as depraved." And here, I think, he runs into another inconsistence. He says the exercises of self-love in the unregenerate sinner, in which "his design is not to hurt others, but to advantage himself, can with no propriety be called exercises of enmity to God or man; the action of a sucking infant, that reaches earnestly for the breast, might as properly be called an exercise of enmity to being in general." And yet, in the next page, he allows "the exercises and actings of natural principles, as corrupted by sin, are unconformable to the law of God, and so are constructively, at least, enmity against God, since they are at best destitute of that rectitude and holiness of principle and end which the law requires." Thus that which in one page is perfectly innocent, and cannot be enmity to God, is in the next page constructive enmity at least. But no one has any reason to be frighted with this constructive enmity; for he goes on to say, "It does not consist in exercise, but in privation of right principles and ends in acting. Take this exercise of the natural principle entirely away, and the sinfulness of the person remains undiminished." So the enmity of the carnal mind turns out a mere nonentity at last; such enmity as a beast or tree may have.

† It is probable Mr. Hemmenway did not view his own scheme in the light in which I have here set it. And if he should think I have made a representation injurious to him, I can only appeal to his book, and say I have been careful not to misrepresent any thing, and really think the judicious reader of what he has wrote will see much more opposed to a proper conviction of sin than I have mentioned. And since I have not injured him, in my own apprehension, he must, I think, on his own principles, consider me as quite innocent.

enemy to God, but is obeying him, and doing his duty in some measure, by which he obtains God's approbation and favorable notice. This is what the sinner, when he is first awakened, desires above all things; and so long as his heart does not fail him here, he will take courage in his opposition to Christ, in attempting to obtain a righteousness of his own. And nothing will drive him from this refuge of lies, this self-righteous bottom, but a conviction that he is so far from doing duty and obeying God, that he is continually, with his whole heart, opposing God and the gospel, and that he never shall do any duty till his heart is subdued, and he is willing to embrace the gospel. This is the voice of Scripture and reason. And for the truth of it I might appeal to the generation of God's people. How many are there to witness, that so long as they could flatter themselves they were doing duty, they had ease and self-confidence! But while they were attempting in this way to save themselves, they were disappointed and confounded. Their sinfulness was so brought into view that their hearts failed them, and they saw they were not obedient, but rebels in all their exercises and doings; sin revived, and they died. And how many are there who have never come to this conviction, but are going on, as they think, in the way of duty, doing all they can, or what they have a next power to do, compassing themselves about with sparks that they have kindled! These will be greatly comforted and strengthened by what Mr. Hemmenway has wrote.

In the Scripture a different method is taken with sinners. Our author has not, I think, found one exhortation there to any duty short of faith and repentance, after all his search and attempts, nor one word that implies that the unbeliever does any duty. But there is much there to the contrary. They who are not turned to God are not spoken of as obeying and doing duty, but are treated as wholly rebels, altogether disobedient. "To turn the disobedient to the wisdom of the just." (Luke i. 17.) "Children of disobedience." (Eph. ii. 2.) "Being abominable and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate. Disobedient, serving divers lusts, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another." (Tit. i. 16; ii. 3.) I therefore think I have warrant to say, in my turn, "If he could have submitted his reasonings to the wisdom of God speaking in the Scriptures, a great part of his performances would never have seen the light."

It is to be wished and hoped, however, that what he has wrote, and all these disputes, though in themselves disagreeable, will be the means of detecting hurtful error and discovering the true character of sinners, given in the Holy Scripture, and the way of treating with them there pointed out. So far as this shall come to pass, man will be abased, and God alone will be exalted and have all the glory.

A

DIALOGUE

BETWEEN

A CALVINIST AND A SEMI-CALVINIST.

Semi-Calvinist. Sir, I have wanted, for some time, to talk with you about the notion which some lately advance, viz., that Christians may, yea, that they ought, and must, be willing to perish forever, in order to be Christians. This is a shocking doctrine to me; for I believe it absolutely impossible for any one to be willing to be eternally wretched; and if it were possible, it would be very wicked; for we are commanded to do that which is directly contrary to this, viz., to desire and seek to escape damnation, and to be saved; as all our most considerable and best divines have taught, which I could easily prove, were it necessary.

Calvinist. I can decide nothing upon this matter until I know what is meant by being *willing to be miserable forever* by those who assert this, or you who oppose it. Let me then ask you, Do you suppose that by being willing to be miserable is meant a being pleased with damnation, or choosing to be miserable forever, for its own sake, or in itself considered, and preferring misery, eternal misery, and being just as the damned will be, to eternal happiness and being just as the blessed will be forever, considering the former as being in itself better than the latter? This is, doubtless, impossible, and, if it were not, would be very unreasonable and wicked. And I question whether any one ever believed this, or meant to assert it, by saying that Christians ought to be willing to perish forever. But if by being willing to be cast off by God forever be meant, that however great and dreadful this evil is, yet a Christian may and ought to be willing to suffer it, if it be necessary in order to avoid a greater evil, or to obtain an overbalancing good, if such a case can be supposed; this, I think, is true, and ought to be maintained, as essential to the

character of a Christian, and that the contrary doctrine is dangerous and hurtful. For it is essential to true benevolence to prefer a greater good to a less, and a less evil to a greater, and that whether it be private or public good or evil, or his own personal good or evil, or that of others.

Semi. I am unable to conceive what you mean by "a greater evil" than eternal damnation, or "a greater good" to be promoted by this evil. Is not this the greatest of all evils? And what good is left for him who is doomed to eternal misery? I grant that a man may, and ought to subject himself, in many cases, to a less evil, in order to avoid a greater, or to obtain a greatly overbalancing good; but in the proposed case, all good is lost forever, and the greatest possible evil takes place, and nothing but evil, without end.

Calv. Is not the damnation of millions a greater evil than the damnation of a single person? And is not the eternal happiness of millions a greater good than that of one individual? This I know you will grant. Supposing it were necessary for one individual to be miserable forever in order to save a million from this misery, — and by his subjecting himself to this, they would all be saved from this evil, and be eternally happy, — ought he not to be willing to perish in such a case, and on this supposition? And if he should not be willing to give himself up to this evil to save a million from it, and to make them eternally happy, would he not prefer a million times greater evil to one a million times less; and choose a million times less good, and prefer it to one a million times greater? And if this is not unreasonable and wicked, and directly contrary to true benevolence, what can be?

Semi. This is making an impossible supposition. The damnation of one man cannot save one, much less a million.

Calv. I grant it is an impossible supposition; but it nevtheless serves to show that there may be a greater evil than the damnation of one individual; a good that will overbalance a million times the evil of the damnation of one man; and that on supposition this greater evil can be avoided, and the overbalancing good obtained by the damnation of one man, and can be done no other way, then it is desirable he should be damned, and he ought to be willing, and to choose it. St. Paul makes this same supposition when he says, "I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen, according to the flesh," and declares that he should be willing to perish, and could even wish it, if by that means all the nation of the Jews might be saved.

Semi. This is carrying things too far. It is impossible that any man should be willing to give up all good and to be

miserable forever, for the sake of the good of others, be it ever so great. And you misunderstand St. Paul, when you suppose he says that he should be willing to perish for the sake of the salvation of his brethren. By being accursed from Christ, he means some temporary evil only, which he might suffer consistently with his being a Christian, and his obtaining eternal life.

Calv. You implicitly grant, in what you have just said, that a man may be willing to suffer evil, and a great degree of it, for the sake of the good of others; and, indeed, this must be granted by all who allow there is any such thing in nature as disinterested benevolence, or loving our neighbor as ourselves. And that this is the nature of true love, or charity, the Scripture asserts. "Charity seeketh not her own." And all men will grant that it is reasonable that a man should give up his own good, to a great degree, for the sake of his neighbor's good. He ought to be willing, for instance, to endure hunger a whole day to save his neighbor from starving. He ought to be willing to give up his whole worldly interest and comfort, and live a life of poverty and want, if this were necessary to save a whole nation from ruin, and make them rich and happy; yea, he ought to be willing to expose and give up his life, if this were necessary for the good of his country, and to save the lives of millions.

And if this be the nature of benevolence, and most reasonable, what bounds can be set to it, and where shall it stop? If true benevolence will give up twenty degrees of personal good for the sake of a thousand degrees of good to others, it will give up a thousand degrees, for the sake of obtaining fifty thousand degrees of good to others; and so on, until he has given up all his own personal good for a proportionably greater good to the public. Nothing but a want of benevolence, or a defect of it, can render a man unwilling, in the case proposed, to give up all his personal good. And there is the same reason for his doing it as there is for his giving up one degree of his own good for the sake of procuring fifty degrees of good to others.

And if benevolence will lead a man to suffer one degree of pain and misery in order to save another from a hundred degrees of pain, and it be most reasonable that he should, then, for the same reason, he will be willing to suffer a hundred degrees of pain or positive evil, if this be necessary, in order to save his neighbors from ten thousand degrees of evil; and he must be willing to suffer all the positive evil and pain that he is capable of, through the whole of his existence, if this be necessary, to save a hundred thousand, or even a hundred, from

this evil. For there is the same reason why he should be willing to suffer all this for the sake of a proportionably greater good to others, as that he should be willing to suffer one degree to save others from a hundred degrees. And if it be contrary to benevolence to be unwilling to suffer one degree of evil to save others from a hundred degrees of it, it must be equally contrary to it to be unwilling to suffer all possible degrees of evil for the sake of saving others from a proportionably greater evil.

It hence appears that the apostle Paul spoke the language of true benevolence, and declared he felt, as he ought to feel, when he said he could wish himself accursed from Christ, if by this means his brethren might be saved, if we understand him as meaning that he was willing to be lost forever for their sake, that they might be saved. And why shall he not be understood to say what he ought to say, and to speak the language of true benevolence, since this is the natural import of his words, and to be accursed from Christ cannot mean less than eternal damnation, without putting an unnatural, forced meaning upon them? St. Paul certainly thought it was a great evil which he mentions, and was willing it should come upon him for the sake of his brethren, since he meant hereby to express his love to them. If the evil were small and inconsiderable, it expressed but a small and inconsiderable degree of benevolence; and the greater the evil was which he was willing to suffer for their sake, the greater benevolence was expressed. He therefore, doubtless, mentioned the greatest evil that he could conceive, and that he was capable of suffering, when he meant to express the greatness and strength of his love to them. And, by the way, as it was no argument that Paul thought it to be a small evil or none at all to be accursed from Christ, or that he had no aversion to it, and that it was not dreadful to him, but the contrary, because he was willing to suffer it, for the sake of his brethren; so it is no argument that any man does not think damnation infinitely dreadful, and has not a proper aversion to it, because he is willing to be damned rather than a greater evil should take place, or for the sake of promoting a greater good.

Semi. For my part, I must say, this is all darkness to me. How can these things be?

Calv. Let us take another, or a little different, view of this point; perhaps it may be set in a more easy, convincing light. I conclude you will grant that the glory of God, or the greatest and most advantageous display of the divine perfections, is of the highest importance, and that it is reasonable, and our duty, to make this our highest and supreme end, in all our desires

and actions; and that we ought not to be willing any thing should take place inconsistent with his glory; and that we ought to be willing that should take place, be it what it may, which is most for his glory, even though it be the eternal damnation of sinners.

SEMI. I grant that we ought to make the glory of God our supreme end. But this will be so far from making us willing to be damned, that it will lead us to desire and pursue our salvation, that he may be glorified in that, and that we may glorify him forever.

CALV. But it is not for the glory of God that all should be saved, but most for his glory that a number should be damned; otherwise, all would be saved. We will, therefore, now make a supposition, which is not an impossible one, viz., that it is most for God's glory, and for the universal good, that you should be damned; ought you not to be willing to be damned, on this supposition, that God could not be glorified by you in any other way?

SEMI. You are full of your suppositions; I will not, I cannot, I have no business to suppose any such thing.

CALV. You know that it is most for the glory of God that some should be damned. And if you do not know that you are a Christian, you do not know but it is in fact true that it is most for the glory of God that you should be damned; the supposition is therefore natural and easy, and you cannot well avoid making it. Supposing, then, this were true, which may be true, notwithstanding any thing you know, how ought you to feel with respect to it? Ought you not to be willing to be damned?

SEMI. This is impossible.

CALV. I grant it is impossible to one who values himself and his own personal interest and happiness more than he does the glory of God, and the highest interest of his kingdom. And it is infallibly certain, that every one who lives and dies with such a disposition, will and must be damned. But to him who loves God supremely, and desires his glory above all things, it is so far from being impossible to be willing to be damned, on supposition this is most for God's glory, that he could not will or choose any thing else. He must say, "Let God be glorified, let what will become of me." If he cannot say so, it is because his own interest and happiness are of more importance with him than the glory of God; or, in other words, because he is not a true friend, but an enemy, to God.

SEMI. But suppose he knows he loves God, and therefore knows that it is for the glory of God that he should be saved?

Calv. No man can know that he loves God until he does really love him; that is, until he does seek his glory above all things, and is disposed to say, "Let God be glorified, whatever may be necessary in order to it," without making any exception; and this is to be willing to be damned, if this be necessary for the glory of God. And as he cannot know that he loves God till he has this disposition, which is necessarily implied in love to God, he does not know that it is not necessary for the glory of God that he should be damned. He, therefore, cannot know that he loves God, and shall be saved, until he knows he has that disposition which implies a willingness to be damned, if it be not most for the glory of God that he should be saved; and if any one thinks he loves God, and shall be saved; if he finds that his love to God does not imply a willingness to be damned, if this were most for his glory, he has reason to conclude that he is deceived, and that what he calls love to God is really enmity against him. For he who cannot love God on any supposition but that he will not damn but save him, is not a friend, but an enemy, to God.

Let us examine this matter in a little different light still. I would ask the following question: Is it not reasonable, and a duty, to submit to the will of God, and acquiesce in it, respecting his governing providence and disposal of all things, so as to be able to say, "Thy will be done," without making any exception?

Semi. I cannot object against this; it must be answered in the affirmative; for God's will is infinitely wise and good, and it is rebellion against him to be unwilling that he should do as he pleases, or to make any exception whatever.

Calv. You have conceded all that is necessary, I think, in order to decide the point in dispute between us. God has revealed it to be his will to punish some of mankind forever. You know not but you are one of them. Whether you shall be saved or damned depends entirely on his will. And supposing he sees it most for his glory and the general good that you should be damned, it is certainly his will that you should be damned. On this supposition, then, you ought to be willing to be damned; for not to be willing to be damned, in this case, is opposing God's will, instead of saying, "Thy will be done."

In this case, it is easy to see that there is no way to escape damnation but by being willing to be damned, on supposition it is the will of God to cast you off, as there is no other way to submit to his will, and acquiesce in it, choosing his will should be done; without which submission it is impossible a man should be saved. For, to make any exception, and to be

willing God should do as he pleases if he will save you, and on no other condition, is no true submission to God, but a setting up your will to be the rule of God's conduct towards you. And to attempt to get to heaven, or to obtain assurance or any evidence that you shall be saved, in opposition to such a submission to the will of God, without making any condition or exception in favor of yourself, is to fight against God, and to go in the road to hell.

Semi. I think these things had better be let alone, supposing there be any truth in what you advance; for such a way of talking only tends to puzzle people, and to discourage and perplex Christians, and will be of no advantage to any body.

Calv. It may puzzle and discourage half Christians, who never were brought to an unreserved submission to the will of God, and to desire his glory above all things. And it is to be wished they might be so discouraged as to be convinced that they are not real Christians. It may also puzzle some real Christians, for a time, who have never carefully attended to this matter, so as to compare their own feelings with this truth, when rightly understood; they having never reviewed this point in a true light, but by their education, and the instructions they have had, have imbibed prejudices against it, as it has been represented, or, rather, misrepresented, to them. But when these have the truth fairly laid before them, and it is properly explained, it is to be presumed it will be so far from perplexing and discouraging them, that it will remove all their prejudices, and it will become a strengthening, encouraging doctrine to them, while they find their hearts in some measure agreeing with this truth, and feel that to have God lose his honor, and the greatest general good not promoted, and the will of God not done, and his infinitely wise and good plan marred and hurt, is to them an infinitely greater evil than their own damnation, or that of millions of others. And if they cannot be saved consistently with God's highest honor and the greatest good of the whole, and agreeably to the divine will and plan, there can be no salvation for them which they would desire, but are willing to be damned, if that only be consistent with all this.

But let the matter be stated on a yet different footing, and the same truth, I believe, will turn up to view, and, perhaps, with some additional evidence, if it can be made more evident. You believe, I conclude, that God will, for his own glory and the greatest general good, punish many of mankind with everlasting destruction.

Semi. To be sure.

Calv. And to this, I suppose, you have no objection, but acquiesce in it, and are quite willing it should be so, since it is necessary for the glory of God and the greatest good of the whole.

Semi. Yes, since this is the will of God, and necessary to answer the end you have mentioned, I am willing they should be miserable forever.

Calv. And how do you know that it is not as necessary that you should be damned to answer the same ends as that any one else should, and that therefore it is the will of God to damn you with them? At least, we may make the supposition that this is really so. How do you feel on this state of the case? Are you willing to be damned, if it be necessary to answer the same end that is sought by the damnation of others, and for the sake of which you are willing they should be damned?

Semi. This is a hard question; I suspect there is some puzzle in it.

Calv. It appears to me to be a plain case. If there be the same reason and the same necessity that you should be damned as that others should be cast off, and this is a sufficient reason with you to be willing they should be damned, then, for the same reason, you must be willing to be damned yourself, and cannot but be willing, if you feel according to reason, and love your neighbor as well and as much as yourself. You must, therefore, if you would not be inconsistent, either disapprove of your neighbors' damnation, and object to it, refusing your consent, or you must be willing to be damned, there being the same reason and necessity for it as there is that your neighbor should be thus punished, who deserves it no more than you. Nothing but an unreasonable selfishness, and disregard to your neighbors' welfare, can make you object to your own damnation, and consent to his.

Semi. I confess I see no way out, and have nothing to reply to this at present. But I have one thing to say that will prove your arguments must be defective somewhere, though I do not see it at present. For the damned will be perfectly wicked, and enemies to God forever; and it cannot be right to be willing to be abandoned to sin and enmity against God, and blaspheme his name forever. Therefore, no man ought to be willing to be damned, unless he ought to be willing to be God's enemy, and like the devil forever, to assert which would be shocking, and no man, surely, can believe it.

Calv. This, I confess, is a plausible objection, and has so much seeming weight in it, that no wonder it should appear to many, at the first view at least, insuperable and unanswer-

able. But since it seems to be proved beyond contradiction, by what has been said above, that a man ought to be willing to be damned on the suppositions which have been made, and it is impossible that two contradictory propositions should be both true, we must not admit this objection to be unanswerable, without carefully reviewing and examining it. And if, upon examination, it shall appear to be without foundation, and contrary to the truth, what has been before proved will be yet more confirmed.

You have granted, and all must grant, that we ought to be willing that some of our fellow-men should be abandoned to sin and ruin, and be confirmed enemies to God forever. And it is plain that to acquiesce in this is so far from being a friend to sin, or sinful, or implying any enmity against God in our hearts, that thus to consent to it because it is the revealed will of God, for his own glory and the general good, is an exercise of love to God and his law, and of benevolence to being in general. And not to be willing, in this case, and to refuse cordially to consent to it, would be rebellion against God. So that there is no other way for us, not to turn enemies to God ourselves, but to be willing that some of our fellow-men should be enemies to him forever. And why must not this be just as true in our own case, or supposing it is most for God's glory and the general good that we should be given up to eternal enmity against God, and, therefore, God hath determined we should be thus given up, and sent to hell, with others? Not to consent to it, on this supposition, would be an act of enmity against God, and to be an enemy to him. But to consent to it, and be willing that God's will should be done for his own glory and the general good, would be so far from being friends to sin, that it would be an exercise of love and friendship to God, and benevolence to being in general. And so long as we continue willing to be ourselves, with others, abandoned to sin and ruin forever, for the reasons and ends mentioned, we shall not, we cannot, be enemies to God or friends to sin, for this implies a plain contradiction. But as soon as we cease to be willing to be thus given up to sin, we are given up, and turned enemies to God and all good; and the evil never can come upon us until we withdraw our submission, and refuse to acquiesce in the will of God. Hence it appears that all the foregoing reasons to prove that we ought to be willing to be damned, if this be the will of God and for his glory and the general good, stand good, and equally prove that we ought to consent to this, on this supposition, even though damnation includes a being given up to sin and enmity against God forever.

Perhaps this point may be further illustrated, and set in a more convincing light to some, by the instance of the angels, who were all created perfectly holy. It was best, on the whole, most for God's glory and the general good, that vast numbers of them should rebel and continue in sin and ruin forever; and therefore it was God's will that this should take place. Suppose this had been revealed to them when they were all perfectly holy, and each one could not know but he was the person who, among others, was to be given up to sin and destruction for the glory of God and the good of the whole. How ought they to have felt on such an occasion? They must all consent to the will of Jehovah, and say, "Let it take place, however many of us, or whoever of us, must fall into this sinful, ruined state, or whatever becomes of us." If they did not thus willingly submit to the will of Jehovah, they would by that turn enemies to him, and fall into that very state, and bring that evil upon themselves which they opposed, or to which they refused to submit for the glory of God and the general good. But so long as they had such a supreme regard for the will of God, his glory, and the general good, as to say, "Thy will be done, let what will come upon us," they would be secure from the evil; and this would be the only way to avoid it. So long as they all continued of this disposition, they continued happy and holy. They who fell into a state of endless sin and woe, did it by giving up such a disposition and indulging a contrary one; and they who continue holy and happy, do continue and persevere in this state and character, by persevering in a submission to the will of God, and such a regard for his glory and the general good, that they are willing to be given up to eternal sin and ruin, if this were necessary to answer these ends, or if they could not remain in this holy and happy state consistently with God's glory and the greatest good of the whole.

In a word, God thought it best, and therefore was willing, that great numbers of angels should become sinful and miserable forever; and all the angels, before any of them fell, were like God in their disposition and choice, and therefore were disposed to acquiesce in his will and choice, when made known to them. Consequently, had God's will been discovered with respect to this, they would all have acquiesced in it, so long as they were holy as God is holy. And if any one should feel the least reluctance to it, even though he knew he was one that was to fall into sin and ruin, he would, by that reluctance and opposition of heart to God's will, be an enemy to God, and fall into ruin. And none could fall into that state, in any possible way, but by opposing God's will, or by being unwilling that his will should be done.

Semi. This is more puzzling yet. You carry us away to the angels, concerning whom we know but little; I choose to keep nearer home, and mind my own business.

Calv. If you are determined not to think, and will not range into any quarter of the universe to get light, you will remain in darkness, and always be puzzled with a thousand things; while a child of fourteen years old, who has a right taste and disposition, and improves his understanding as he ought, will be at no loss about them, but will see them in the light of demonstration.

Your last objection was, that for a man to be willing to be a confirmed enemy to God, if necessary for the glory of God and the general good, would be a sinful volition, and therefore he ought not to be willing. I have undertaken to show that this is so far from being true, that not to be willing, in the case proposed, as to oppose this, would be a sinful volition; and there is no other way, in order to avoid sin, but to be willing, in this case, it being necessary to answer these ends, to be cast off into a state of perfect wickedness and ruin. And I think what has been said amounts to a clear demonstration, and wish you to review it with calmness and attention, and show, if you can, where the argument fails, or else yield to the force of it, and think of it until it becomes easy and familiar to you.

Semi. Your reasonings on the subject seem to be clear and conclusive, I confess. At least, I see no way at present to confute them. But I do not choose to have this matter settled by metaphysical reasoning only. I want Scripture proof and evidence; for when we go by this, we are on sure ground. I observe you have made but little use of the Bible in your arguing on this point, from which I concluded you can find little to your purpose in that.

Calv. I have aimed to keep the Scripture in view in all I have said on the subject, and think I have made what is there revealed the foundation of all my reasonings and arguments on the points; and that I have been, through the whole of our conversation, "reasoning with you out of the Scriptures." From the Scriptures we learn that the glory of God ought to be our ultimate and highest end; that we are commanded to seek his glory in all we do, and therefore are forbid to desire or pursue any thing which is contrary to his highest glory, and required to submit to any thing, and desire it may take place, which is most for his glory. Therefore, on supposition it be most for his glory that I should not be saved, but lost, I ought to submit, and not desire to be saved.

Again: the Scripture teaches us that we ought to be all

submission to the will of God, and always to be disposed to say from the heart, "Not my will, but thine, be done." Therefore, on supposition it is the will of God to cast me off, I must say heartily, "Thy will be done." Not to say and feel so, is to rise in rebellion against God.

Moreover, the Scripture requires us to love our neighbors as ourselves. If I do so, and am willing God should cast any of my fellow-men into hell forever for his own glory and the general good, — which I must be, unless I rebel against his revealed will, — then I must be willing to be cast off myself, if this be necessary to answer the same ends.

These are the reasons and arguments by which I have endeavored to prove what I have advanced; and is not this arguing from Scripture? All those passages of Scripture which teach us to make the glory of God our supreme end, — to be all submission to his will, without making any exception, and to love our neighbor as ourselves, all which it is difficult and needless to mention, — do prove and really assert the doctrine I have affirmed.

Besides, I have introduced the express words of Paul, strongly expressing this to be his wish and desire with respect to himself, might this be the means of saving his brethren.

The words of Eli express the same sentiment. "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good." (1 Sam. iii. 18.) This he says with respect to God's awful threatening that he would judge his house forever, and that he had sworn that the iniquity of Eli's house should not be purged with sacrifice nor offerings forever. And does not David express the same thing when he says, "But if he thus say, I have no pleasure in thee; behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him"? (2 Sam. xv. 26.) Does he not resign his whole interest, temporal and eternal, to God's pleasure, without making any condition? If he say, I have no pleasure in thee, is not this to cast him off forever? "Behold, here I am, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him." How could he express this sentiment in plainer and more strong language?

Semi. But what advantage will this be to me, or any one else? If it be true, I see not that it is a point worth contending about, or what will be the benefit of understanding and believing it.

Calv. I may ask you, sir, what benefit there is in opposing it, if it be not true? It is represented as a very hurtful and wicked doctrine; and if I am not mistaken, you considered it in this light, in the beginning of our conversation upon the subject. In this view, you thought it of importance to oppose it. And if it be true, the contrary error must be as wicked

and hurtful as this would be, were it not true. The truth will bear examination, and ought not to be given up because some do not understand it, and do oppose it. It certainly can do no one any hurt to believe it; but may be of great service, if rightly improved; and the contrary error I believe to be of a very bad tendency. Suffer me to illustrate this, in a few words.

A denial of this truth, and most of the arguments to support such denial, do misrepresent the nature of disinterested benevolence, and are really a denial of the existence of any such thing. And it is supposed that selfishness is justifiable, and not opposed by real Christianity, but that Christians are warranted to act, and must act, from selfish principles. This, I think, is evident, from what has been said on this subject, and most of the objections you have made. This tends to give a wrong idea of true religion, and to encourage professed Christians in the indulgence of a selfish spirit; and to think themselves Christians, while their feelings and exercises are in direct opposition to true Christianity. And this way of thinking, as I think, discovers a contractedness of mind, as it tends to contract it more and more, and to sink it down to a narrow and low way of thinking and acting, contrary to that enlargedness of mind, and nobleness of soul, which real Christianity inspires, and which is implied in disinterested benevolence.

And it is implicitly a denial of the eternal damnation of any of mankind. For, as has been observed, if we love our neighbor as ourselves, which is necessarily implied in true holiness, and we are unwilling to be damned ourselves, when this is necessary to answer the same ends, to answer which they are damned, then we cannot acquiesce in their damnation; nor ought any in heaven or earth to be willing that there should be any such thing as damnation. Consequently, there can be no such thing consistently with the inclination of any holy being. But if this unwillingness to be damned ourselves, when this is as necessary for the glory of God and the general good as that any of our fellow-men should be damned, is owing to selfishness, and an exercise of that affection which is contrary to loving God supremely, and our neighbor as ourselves, then this justifies selfishness, as has been observed, and justifies the Christian in avowing it, as a good and holy principle; by which he is willing others should suffer that for the glory of God which he is not willing to suffer, were it necessary to answer the same end; and, in short, cares not what becomes of his fellow-men, or of God's honor, if he can but be safe and happy. Surely that doctrine which embraces and supports one of these alternatives, and

does really avow the latter, and justifies all the selfishness in the world, and supposes there is no such thing as disinterested benevolence, is a very dangerous and hurtful doctrine, and tends to root all true religion out of the world.

On the other hand, the doctrine which I have endeavored to explain and vindicate tends to the advantage of Christians many ways, which advantages naturally come into view, by attending to what has been said of the evil consequences of the opposite doctrine.

It is suited to enlarge the mind of the Christian, and to extend his ideas and thoughts to objects which are great and immense, and to wake up the feelings and exercises of disinterested benevolence, of supreme love to God, and regard to the general good, which swallows up and forgets his own personal interest, as nothing in comparison with these grand objects. This will help him, in the best and easiest manner, to distinguish between true religion and false; and to obtain and maintain the evidence in his own mind that he is a friend to God, and has that benevolence in which holiness does summarily consist.

This will prepare him to acquiesce in the eternal destruction of those who perish, and even to rejoice in it, as necessary for the glory of God, and the greatest good of the whole, in the exercise of that disinterested benevolence which makes him to be willing to be one of that sinful, wretched number, were this necessary to answer these ends.

This will prevent his preaching or talking in that selfish way about religion, which too many ministers and others do; or indulging selfish affections, under the notion of their being the exercise of true religion.

A belief of this doctrine, and exercises answerable, will bring and keep in view true, unreserved resignation to the will of God, and prevent his deceiving himself with an imagined resignation which is not true resignation, but the exercise of wicked selfishness and impiety, and with which many are deceiving themselves. For instance, when a parent loses a dear and only child he is resigned and willing his child should be taken from him by death, if God will make it happy forever. This condition spoils the resignation, and it expresses no true regard to God, but only a regard to his child; which the most selfish parent has, as well as the most benevolent. So one who thinks himself a Christian is willing to be poor and despised, to be sick and suffer great pain, if it may work for his good, and God will make him eternally happy at last, and thinks this true resignation, and that in a high and uncommon degree; whereas this is not real resignation

to the will of God, and expresses nothing but selfishness, in making God a tool to answer our own selfish ends. He will consent that God should make him happy, and answer his ends, and is willing to be in his hands on no other condition. This expresses no true regard to God, or the general good. To conclude, the Christian who believes this truth, and has feelings and exercises answerable to it, with pleasure gives himself into the hands of God, and rejoices that he and all things are in his hands, and that he will glorify himself by all men, either in their salvation or damnation, and says to God, "If it be most for thy glory that I should be cast off, thy will be done. 'Father, glorify thy name.' I have no condition to make; let God be glorified, and his kingdom be most happy and glorious, whatever becomes of me." And the stronger and more clear these exercises are, the greater evidence he will have, when he reflects upon them, that he is a true friend to God, and that it is most for his glory, and for the greatest general good, that he should be perfectly holy and happy in his kingdom forever.

A SERIOUS

ADDRESS TO PROFESSING CHRISTIANS,

IN THE NAME, AND FROM THE WORDS, OF JESUS CHRIST.

"Behold I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame."—Rev. xvi. 15.

The warning, exhortation, and encouragement here given by Christ to his professed friends, suited to excite them to attend to their duty and faithfulness to him at all times, are applicable to them in whatever circumstances and age of the world they have lived since they were published; but are more especially applicable to those who live in the time and circumstances to which the words have a particular reference. In order to know what time this is, and what are the events which will then take place, the context with which these words are connected must be carefully attended to and understood.

These words are spoken by Christ, while John is narrating the events which were to take place under the sixth vial while it was running. In the midst of his narration, or before he had finished it, he is interrupted, and Jesus Christ speaks these remarkable and important words; so that they immediately respect the events contained in the scene which was opening to John. In this chapter we have an account of the preceding vials by the angels to whom they were given. These seven vials or cups are said to be full of the wrath of God, and to contain the seven last plagues or remarkable judgments which were to be inflicted chiefly on the beast and his adherents; that is, the pope and the hierarchy of the church of Rome, his supporters and followers. He was to continue one thousand two hundred and sixty years, and these vials contained the several successive calamities and judgments, the effects of the divine wrath, which were to be inflicted on him and his adherents during his continuance; which, in the events under

the last vial, shall complete his utter destruction. If the time of the running of these seven vials be computed to take up or comprehend one thousand two hundred and sixty years, the time in which the beast is to continue, each vial will take up less than two hundred years; but nothing appears to confine the time of each vial to the same number of years. Some of the vials may comprehend more, or fewer years than others, according to the longer or shorter continuance of the calamitous events which they represent and predict. This can be determined best by the time and duration of the events which have come to pass and were predicted under the vials which have been poured out. A number of able expositors, who have carefully consulted the most learned and credible historians who lived in those times, have made it evident, that the events predicted under the first four vials took place before the reformation from Popery by Luther and Calvin, which began near the beginning of the sixteenth century. "The fifth vial was poured out on the seat (throne) of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness, and they gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds." When the reformers arose and declared the pope to be antichrist, and forsook the church of Rome as not the true, but an anti-Christian church, the mother of harlots, many became their followers, and embraced their doctrines. Men in high office, who had great power and influence, joined with the reformers and protected them, and a number of nations and kingdoms renounced the pope and his authority. By this his throne, his power and influence, which had been very high, great, and universal, were greatly contracted and weakened, and threatened with annihilation. This greatly alarmed the pope and his party, and they exerted all their power, policy, and cunning to suppress it, and destroy the chief promoters of it; and the emperor of Germany was excited and persuaded, with all his power and the forces which could be raised, to make war on the Protestants; but he was defeated, and great numbers of his followers were destroyed; and he relinquished his crown and office and shut himself up in a cloister, and spent the remainder of his days in dejection and a painful melancholy and gloom. And various other methods were taken by them to destroy the Protestants, and put an end to the reformation, for more than a century; but they were continually defeated, and all the policy and craft by which they had prospered, and by which the pope had been exalted to universal dominion, now failed them, and they were involved in political darkness, and the painful gloom of disappointment and defeat. These

were wounds and sores which gave them unspeakable anguish and pain, and could not be healed.

And they repented not of their deeds, and opposed all reformation in doctrine and practice. They called a council of many bishops and inferior clergy, under a pretence of healing matters, which sat eighteen years; but were so far from doing any thing towards a reformation, that they decreed a number of things which were still more blasphemous of God and divine truth. This vial was running till near the end of the seventeenth century.

The sixth vial probably began to be poured out at the latter end of the seventeenth century, or at the beginning of the eighteenth, and has been running all the last century, is running now, and will continue to run to the middle of the present, if not longer. Some of the events which were to take place under this vial are described in the following words: "And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great River Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared." In order to understand these metaphorical, typical words, it must be observed, that ancient Babylon, which was an enemy to the visible people of God, and persecuted and destroyed many of them, and subjected the remainder to a state of grievous captivity for seventy years, until it was taken by the eastern kings of the Medes and Persians, was a type of the anti-Christian church of Rome. Therefore, this church with its appendages is repeatedly called Babylon in this Book of Revelations.

The great River Euphrates run through the midst of Babylon, entering in on one side of it, and passing out on the other side under the walls, and was a defence to the city, and by it they had a great supply of provision. Cyrus, king of Persia, acting in conjunction with his uncle Darius, king of the Medes, took the city by turning the water of the river into another channel, which prepared the way for his army to march in under the walls where the river used to run, and was now dried up: in this way they entered the city, slew the king and chief men, and took possession of it, which issued in its final destruction.

The prophecy before us has an allusion to this type and figurative representation in predicting the fall of spiritual Babylon, and the manner in which it was to be effected. By drying up the River Euphrates is meant the removal or diminution of whatever has been the great and chief support of the pope, and the church of which he is the head; and this chiefly consists in the strength and power which he has in various ways, and by different instruments, obtained, especially by the stream of money and riches which have been made, by vari-

ous means, to flow into that church for many ages from all parts of Christendom. This stream has been in a considerable measure dried up in the last century, by the nations withholding much of the money which used to flow into that church like a great river, and turning it into another channel; and the order and society of Jesuits, which has been a strong pillar and support of that church many ways, has been demolished and taken away in the last century; and what has been done in the latter part of that century in pulling down and impoverishing the pope and the church of Rome, by which it has fallen almost to the ground, is notorious to all.

By the kings of the east are meant all those, in whatever part of the world they live, and whoever they are, who are enemies to the spiritual Babylon, and seek to pull down and destroy it, typified by the kings of the east who fought against and subdued the ancient, literal Babylon.

The late revolution in France, by which the church of Rome is again introduced there by an agreement between the chief consul and the pope, at a first and superficial view may appear to be a revival of the cause of that church, and a step towards the pope's rising to his former height. But when the subject is carefully examined, it will doubtless appear otherwise. The chief consul really claims, and has obtained, the power in France, and in other states, over which he claims a jurisdiction, which the pope used to claim; and the latter is only made a tool by the former, to answer his own ambitious purposes. It may soon appear that this event was the only proper step to effect the utter ruin of the pope and of that church. Be that as it may, we are sure that this spiritual Babylon will fall to the ground under the vial which is now running, and the succeeding one, and that all the succeeding events will issue in its utter overthrow, though the particular steps which will be taken to effect this cannot be known and described, as they are future, any further than they are revealed in Scripture prophecy.

There is a prophecy in the Book of Daniel which illustrates the case before us. In describing the fourth beast, which now consists of the pope and the hierarchy of the church of Rome, he says, "And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potter's clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided. And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly broken. And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men; but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay."

This prophecy has, doubtless, been fulfilled in other in-

stances, but is eminently so in the *concordat* between the first consul of France and the pope, in which the latter attempts to unite with the seed of men the men of the world, who are apparent infidels and real enemies to Christianity, even as it consists in Popery, unless when they can answer their own ends by it. By this the pope has not strengthened but weakened his cause, and prepared the way to be dashed in pieces, by the stone cut out of the mountain without hands, to be destroyed by Christ.

John goes on to relate what he further saw in vision as taking place under this sixth vial. "And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, (or doing wonders,) which go forth unto the kings of the earth, and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty." While the beast and the hierarchy of the false church of Rome, here called the false prophet, who is elsewhere described as the great harlot, sitting on the beast, who is the mother of harlots, and abominations of the earth; while these are sinking and expiring, they, in conjunction with the old dragon, the devil, who had been the great invisible agent in setting them up and supporting them, and by whom they were always inspired, emit a filthy spawn, a most mischievous progeny, which are no other than the spirits of devils, which rush forth to the kings of the earth, and the inhabitants of the whole world, to corrupt the world, and promote all manner of wickedness in principle and practice, in rebellion against Christ and his gospel. And in doing this, they will effect wonderful events which were not expected, and never had been in such a manner and degree. By this they will arm mankind in general, especially those in the Christian world, against God and the Redeemer, and unite and gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. The beast and harlot will live in these times, and not become extinct till this battle comes on.

This *gathering* to the battle does not mean a local collection into one place, but a general agreement among the nations, to oppose Jesus Christ and the gospel, in principle and practice, and thus arming themselves against God, by which they will be prepared for the battle, which will not consist in any particular combat with carnal weapons between Christians and those who oppose them, but in the judgments and destruction which God will inflict on the open and incorrigible enemies of Christ and his church, by which they and their cause will be amply vindicated and avenged, and deserved wrath and

vengeance will be inflicted on their enemies, to the uttermost. This battle will commence in the fulness of it when the seventh vial shall be poured out, when, by the events which take place under the sixth vial, the body of the inhabitants of the world will be ripened for the punishment and vengeance by which they shall be destroyed; which battle is described in the latter part of this and the nineteenth chapters.

While these evil spirits are doing their work and are using all their influence to arm wicked men and unite them against Christ, he stands forth and speaks in the words now under consideration, and certainly speaks them with reference to the events predicted in this vision, respecting this battle, and the events preparatory to it, and therefore are spoken to those professing Christians who live in these days, as a warning, direction, and encouragement to them. And if we live in the very time pointed out in this vision, it concerns us to know it, and earnestly attend to, and conscientiously improve, these words of Christ, as the only way to be safe and blessed.

It becomes Christians to discern and know the signs of the times in which they live; to attend to the events of divine Providence compared with Scripture; with discerning and judgment to view the state of religion and morality in the world, so far as they are under advantages to extend their knowledge of these important concerns. And they have opportunity, which they ought diligently to improve, to compare the circumstances and particular events of the times in which they live with the prophetic part of Scripture, to find, if they can, with a degree of satisfaction and certainty, the agreement of the events which are before their eyes, with the predictions of Scripture, and hereby learn what is their particular duty, and what is come and coming in the world, as it respects the moral corruption and consequent misery of mankind, and the depressed state of Christianity, and the final victory it shall obtain.

That we live in the time when the sixth vial is poured out, which has been running during the last century, or longer, is evident from Scripture prophecy, as has been observed, and is abundantly confirmed and rendered certain by the events which have taken place in the last century, and are now coming to pass before our eyes, which are predicted under this vial. The River Euphrates, agreeably to the explication now given, has been drying up for many years, and the church of Rome is impoverished and weakened many ways, by which the way has been opened for her enemies, whoever and wherever they be, to assault and destroy her, and she has sunk in a manner which never took place before, as has been observed.

And while this old harlot, who is the mother of all the abominations in the earth, who rides on the beast, supported by the old dragon, the devil, is falling and expiring, they three join to emit and send forth evil spirits like themselves, which must therefore be spirits of devils which go forth to corrupt the world, so as to arm the people in general against God, in a state of open and high rebellion against the Redeemer. And is not all this now taking place, which begun many years ago, and is now increasing in a remarkable and rapid progress? Let Christians who have discerning to know the times attend and judge.

In the last century there has been a greater spread and prevalence of error, infidelity, and all kinds of immorality and wickedness than was ever before known, and that in a manner and by means new and strange. Men of great abilities and learning have risen up champions for infidelity, and consequently for vice and immorality; and secret societies have been formed and combined to do every thing in their power to put an end to Christianity, and every institution that would lay any restraint on their lusts. To this end they spread their emissaries wherever there is a prospect of the gaining proselytes. They introduce themselves and their disciples as teachers of schools, and into colleges, and the courts of princes and kings, to proselyte as many of the great as they can. They have been detected, and their doctrines and schemes have been exposed to the public; but this has not discouraged them; and through the connivance of the great and obsequiousness of the multitude, they have gone on to practise and prosper. In their unwearied exertions and attempts they turned their attention particularly to France, and were so successful as to influence a great part of the leading men there, and a number in the king's court, to embrace their principles and scheme, which produced a revolution in that nation, by which Christianity and all the institutions of it were abolished, and infidelity introduced in the room of it. In the presence of the national convention a man of note arose and declared he was an atheist, that there was no god but liberty, which gained the approbation and loud applause of the whole convention. And a number of priests appeared in the hall of the convention, and cast off the garments and the badges of their sacerdotal office, and thus publicly in this contemptuous manner renounced Christianity, and in a literal sense and most expressly put off their Christian garments themselves instead of keeping them. The leaders in this scheme, in their endeavors to overthrow Christianity, espouse and propagate among their disciples this maxim, "that any means necessary or tending to promote a good end

cannot be wrong, but must be right and commendable." Hence, as they propose the total abolition of Christianity, as necessary for the happiness of mankind and of their own, and therefore the highest and best end, they consider any means which they can practise, and in their view are suited to answer this end, to be right and laudable. Consequently, when the grossest hypocrisy, fraud, lying, cheating, murder, and even self-murder, or any vice which can be mentioned, are in their view necessary or needful to answer this end, they are to be practised without the least remorse of conscience. Therefore, when they think it the best way for them to injure Christianity, they will appear zealous advocates for it, and assert and deny any thing, however contrary to the truth, when they think it will answer their ends. There have been volumes written in Europe by men whose learning, knowledge, and veracity cannot be reasonably questioned, who have detected and abundantly proved these things, and many more gross immoralities, to be practised and promoted by the leaders in this iniquitous scheme to crush Christianity.

While infidelity has spread in Europe, vice and gross immorality have kept pace with it. In France, especially, these prevail to an extent and degree never known before. This is supported by the most credible testimony. And as far as their armies have carried their conquests, which have been rapid and extensive, they have spread the principles of infidelity, and the practice of immorality, to a degree never known before since Christianity was received by those nations. This is abundantly testified by the learned and pious in Europe. And multitudes of those who do not professedly renounce Christianity embrace those doctrines which are so contrary to the gospel as to lead to infidelity, and really are no better; while the multitude of common people are sunk into vice, carelessness about religion, and ignorance of the nature and true doctrines of it. Can any one, who takes a proper and attentive view of all this, doubt that the evil spirits, the spirits of devils, have been let loose with an extraordinary commission to corrupt mankind, especially the Christian world, during the last century, and are still progressing with uncommon power and rapidity, agreeably to the prophecy before us?

America has not escaped the fangs of these unclean spirits of devils. There are traces and fruits of their operation, which must be strikingly visible to all that do not wilfully shut their eyes. There was indeed a remarkable and general attention to religion in America, particularly in New England, about the middle of the last century, and a number were hopefully converted. But a great part of the professed subjects of this revival

were so imprudent and irregular in their conversation and conduct, and so many apostatized to error, irreligion, and vice, that on the whole it tended to strengthen the prejudices of many against religion, and was the means of leading many to infidelity, under the invisible influence of Satan. Since that, infidelity, irreligion, and vice have increased, but the first of these not so openly, but in a great measure secretly and under cover. But in the latter part of the last century many European infidels were introduced to America, who disseminated their infidel principles by conversation, and spreading books written against divine revelation. One man in Europe wrote a pamphlet against the Bible, which is reprinted and spread in America, and was read with avidity by multitudes, both youth and others, and gave a turn in their ignorant and already vitiated minds in favor of infidelity. And a number of books and pamphlets have been published against Christianity, and in favor of Deism and atheism, which are spreading and highly approved by many. And societies are formed composed of infidels, who are assiduous in doing all they can secretly, and by any means in their power, to discredit and root out Christianity and all religion and morality. This is a wonderful, and in some sense and degree a miraculous event, that in a Christian land, where the body of the people were friendly to Christianity, there should be such a great and sudden change in favor of infidelity, and such great and unwearied exertions to promote it, in a manner and degree which never were experienced before in the Christian world. It cannot be accounted for but by supposing it to be produced by that invisible agency of evil spirits on the corrupt hearts of men, which is the prophecy before us, predicted to take place at this time, and is a certain and undeniable evidence that this prophecy is now fulfilling, and is therefore a demonstration of the truth of Christianity, which infidelity is attempting to destroy; and that though it may seem for a time to prevail, it, with the promoters of it, will soon and unexpectedly be destroyed, and Christianity will revive, prosper, and triumph.

It is proper to attend to some other things, not only as a further evidence, if needed, that these spirits of devils are now among us, and producing great effects before our eyes, but that they are making rapid progress, and have not yet finished, but have only begun, their work. There are a number of circumstances and events taking place favorable to the cause of infidelity and vice, and leading to the progress of these, which it is not prudent or needful particularly to mention, which are in the full view of those Christians who have their eyes open. There is an apparent general decay and neglect of religion

among those who do not in words expressly renounce Christianity, but think themselves friends to it. There is a prevailing indifference and carelessness about religion, and consequently ignorance of the nature and doctrines of it. The churches are generally small; by far the greater part of the people neglect to join them. And many, if not most, of the members of churches are lukewarm; ignorant or erroneous, if not immoral; and the discipline of most churches is very lax, if not wholly laid aside. The Sabbath is neglected and profaned as it never was before, especially in New England; and public worship is greatly neglected; and family religion is generally and almost universally laid aside, and parental government, and religious education and instruction of their children and domestics, have almost wholly ceased. Consequently, a general ignorance in religion and the practice of vice take place. Some of the important truths of the gospel are neglected and opposed, and many errors imbibed, which really subvert the gospel, and have a direct and strong tendency to infidelity and atheism, as may, perhaps, be more particularly considered hereafter.

In this situation of affairs, public and private, there is a strong tendency to universal infidelity and atheism, and we are ripening fast for it, if God do not prevent, to which mercy we have no claim, but rather are provoking him to give us up to the lusts of our hearts, to run on to the most gross infidelity, and all manner and degrees of vice and wickedness, which will introduce great temporal misery and wretchedness, and bring on utter and eternal destruction. And they who will keep their Christian garments will suffer shame and reproach, and innumerable other evils, and it may be the most cruel death that evil men can invent and inflict.

All things will go fast on to this issue, unless prevented by the interposition of divine power and grace, which we are sure will not be done till mankind in general are resolutely and fully armed against Christ, prepared for the battle and ripe for destruction, from the prophecy under consideration. How long time this is yet to take, none can with precision tell. It will continue till the sixth vial is expended, which, as has been observed, will yet run most probably for half a century, or more. But it is worthy of observation, that the vials may not be so perfectly distinct as to wholly run out before the next, in a measure, begins. Under the seventh vial the great battle which Jesus Christ will carry on against Satan and a wicked world armed against him will come on in the full strength of it, and will continue, till by the expressions of the divine anger, in inflicting various and dreadful successive judgments, of

which no particular and full description can now be given, or any adequate idea be formed of them, till they shall take place, the obstinately wicked shall be destroyed and swept from off the earth, having drank the dregs of this dreadful cup, which is in the hand of the Lord, and wrung them out. Ps. lxxv. 8. But some drops of this vial may fall upon the world, in some parts of it, before the time is come to pour it out without restraint or mixture, and before the events predicted under the sixth vial are finished, but while that vial is yet running. Sore calamities and awful destructions may be inflicted in many places, and at different times, as a testimony of the displeasure of God with the wickedness of men, and a warning to the world of the greater calamities and certain destruction which are coming on mankind, unless they repent. The great and remarkable calamities which have been lately felt in France and other parts of Europe, while infidelity and wickedness have been increasing and spreading, may be considered to be of this kind, and as a warning to the world, and to the United States of America in particular. And as great, if not more dreadful, judgments will doubtless be inflicted on these states before the sixth vial is ended, as a warning and call to repentance.

It is doubtless thought by some professing Christians that the above representation of the state of religion, and the prospect with respect to it in America, is not just. There have been lately remarkable revivals of religion in many places and parts of the United States, and great numbers hopefully converted, and a number of Deists have renounced their infidelity and become Christians. And not a few men of judgment and observation have thought that religion is rather in a progressive state than otherwise.

Upon this it is observed, that there is reason of much thankfulness that there have been so many remarkable revivals of religion of late, and that such a number have been hopefully converted. But this number is presumed to be much less than the rest of the inhabitants of most, if not all, of the places where these revivals have taken place; and when compared with the number of inhabitants of these states it will appear that these converts bear but a very small proportion to the whole, and those which make the body of the people have in general received no benefit by these revivals, but the contrary. They are more hardened in impenitence, vice, and infidelity; so that there may be, and doubtless is, an increase, on the whole, of infidelity and wickedness, notwithstanding these revivals. Jesus Christ will have and maintain his church in the midst of the greatest opposition to it, and in

order to this, sinners must be converted, more or less, and raised up as witnesses to his truth and cause. And these revivals are a warning and loud call to all the people to repent, whether they will hear or not. In the mean time, there is no evidence that they will increase or continue.

It is also supposed by some that the cause of infidelity is rather on the decline in this nation, and that disbelievers now think more favorably of Christianity than they did some time ago, as they are less open, bold, and noisy in opposition to it than they were, and some of them speak in favor of it at times.

To this it may be replied, that such a change of disbelievers, in appearance and conduct, may not be the least evidence that they are really more friendly to the gospel, as a revelation from heaven, than they have been, or that their cause is on the decline, and does not increase in strength and numbers. This may be, in their view, the best way they can take to support their cause and carry on their scheme, and they will turn into any shape, and say any thing which they think will best answer this end, as has been observed. Besides, in the political contest which now subsists in the United States, in both parties of which there are doubtless disbelievers in divine revelation, there are a variety of circumstances which need not be mentioned, which do operate as a restraint upon infidels, in different ways, who are on either side, to produce the effect mentioned, consistently with their being as much engaged as ever in the cause of infidelity, and their prospect of success.

The foregoing has been designed to point out the signs of this time, and to show that the Savior has particular reference to the events which are now taking place before our eyes, and others which are soon to follow, in his words under consideration; and that, therefore, they are spoken in a particular and special manner to those professed Christians who are now on the stage of life, and to all of this denomination who shall live before the seventh vial shall be poured out.

The following will consist in an explanation of these words, and a practical improvement of them, suited to excite the attention of all professed friends of Christianity to the warning, threat, command, encouragement, and promise contained in them, and to induce them to regard and practise what is here recommended by the glorious Head of the church as the only way to safety and happiness.

"Behold, I come as a thief." This is introduced with a note of attention. Behold! This denotes that what Christ is going to speak is of great importance, and demands the

serious and close attention of all who have ears to hear. The coming of Christ is often spoken of in Scripture, and intends various and different times and manners of his coming; and he is often said to come as a thief, to denote not the end of his coming, but the circumstances and manner of his coming. The thief comes to do mischief and steal. Christ comes to accomplish the wisest and best ends. And though he often comes in judgment, to inflict evil, yet he never injures any, and he always designs kindness and mercy to his church. But he comes as a thief, that is, unperceived, and while his coming is not thought of by the men of the world, and by all who are spiritually asleep, whether professing Christians or not. His coming is perceived and realized by none but those who are awake and on the watch.

The coming of Christ here seems to comprehend two events which are nearly connected together, and in some sense one, viz., the gathering of the people to the battle by the influence of evil spirits, and his coming to the battle, and carrying it on till it is finished. Christ really comes by and with his enemies, when they rise, oppose, and attempt to destroy his church. He superintends and directs the whole, and his hand and presence is to be seen in all the transactions and events which are accomplished by wicked agents, whether visible or invisible. This is intimated in the words immediately following. "And he gathered them together into a place called, in the Hebrew tongue, Armageddon." He, that is, Christ, gathered them together. This is said to denote the superintendence and agency of Christ in gathering them together, while men and devils are active in producing the same event. Thus when the king of Assyria gathered a great army together with an intent to invade and lay waste the land of Judah and Jerusalem, God says he sent him to accomplish his purpose, and that the king and his army were in his hand, and under his influence and direction, as much as the saw and axe are in the hand of the workman. And when the false prophets were deceived, and flattered Ahab that he should prosper in going to war, in which his army was conquered, and he lost his own life, it is said the Lord put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these false prophets. So Christ is said to come with the Romans when they gathered their army to destroy Jerusalem.

Jesus Christ is therefore now come, and coming in all the remarkable, unexpected, wonderful events which are taking place under the sixth vial, by the agency of men and devils. He superintends and directs the whole until all things are prepared for the battle of the great day of God Almighty, and

he has gathered together the army of his enemies. Then he will come to battle, and destroy his enemies, and deliver his church, and cause it to prosper as it never has done before. But in all this coming of Christ, none will be properly sensible of it, or prepared for it, but those who are awake, watch, and keep their garments; to the rest he comes as a thief.

"Blessed is he that watcheth." When he that watcheth is pronounced blessed, it supposes that none who are not of this character are blessed, but the contrary. To watch, in the sense of the text, is to be spiritually awake, to look inward, and view their own motions and moral exercises, and on their outward conduct to learn on whose side they are, and to look round and discern the state and condition of the cause of Christ in the world; what is the moral state of the world; what the enemies to Christianity are doing; what is their apparent strength and success in their cause; and what appears to have come to pass, and to be soon coming, from divine prophecy; and to be concerned to be in readiness to do all they can, and whatever they are called to do, for the cause of Christ, and in opposition to that of his enemies.

"Blessed is he that keepeth his garments." This seems to be an allusion to a soldier set on the watch in the time of war and danger, when the army to which he belongs is surrounded, and threatened to be invaded and conquered by a host of enemies. His duty is to continue awake, and observe the motion of the enemy. If he put off the livery of a soldier and lie down to sleep, he may be surprised by the enemy, and obliged to run away naked, or will fall into the hands of his foes, and be carried off by them. In the spiritual warfare in which every Christian is engaged, every one must be continually on the watch, and keep on him the livery of a Christian soldier, and never, on any occasion, put these garments off and lay them aside. Watching and keeping his garments imply each other, and cannot be separated. He who doth watch, keepeth his garments; and he who keepeth his garments, watcheth.

The garments of a Christian, by which he is distinguished from all others, and are the Christian livery, consist in the knowledge and practice of the truth, in which he "puts on Christ," and is conformed to him in heart and conduct, wherein he has set an example to be imitated, and embraces the truth, the doctrines he taught, and commands he has enjoined, both in the exercises of his heart and in his conversation and conduct. This is to be clothed with every Christian grace and virtue, of which a very important one is humility. The whole is comprehended in love, in putting on charity, that is, love, and walking in love. This comprises the whole of the

Christian character, and the garments with which he is clothed. None but true Christians, as has been observed, do put on these garments in reality; but many others do put them on by profession and in appearance in the sight of men. The latter often in times of temptation do not keep their garments, but fall from their profession or apostatize in conduct so as to discover their shame. And real Christians are in such danger of losing their garments that it is necessary for them to watch and exert themselves to keep them, lest they should walk naked.

But it is of importance that these Christian garments should be more particularly described, and to show how they may be kept, and what is necessary to do it, and in what ways they may be soiled, or put off and lost. The Christian has put on Jesus Christ; he is clothed with him, by imbibing the same spirit that is in him; by sincere and ardent love to him, union, and constant, and close adherence to him, and trust in him for all he wants; a cordial, strong devotedness to him, his service, interest, and cause, as the great and only interest worthy to be sought and pursued, in which his heart is principally engaged and swallowed up. Consequently, whatever is contrary to, and opposes, the honor and interest of his dear Lord and Master, he is quick to discern, and he most sensibly feels it, and is disposed to oppose it in all proper ways, whatever he must be led to sacrifice for it, not excepting his own life. All this is necessary for a Christian to keep his garments. Jesus Christ has expressly asserted this. He who is only a visible, professing Christian, is not thus a friend to Christ, and really cares nothing about his honor or interest, and may really put off the garments of a Christian, and betray the cause of Christ, while, through his insensibility, and want of love to Christ and his cause, or a contrary disposition, he is wholly insensible of it. And when he cannot continue his Christian profession without endangering his life, or in some way hurting his temporal interest, he will part with this visible Christian garment, or do that which is equivalent.

This love, without which there can be really no part of these Christian garments, also carries, in the nature of it, a peculiar and strong union to the friends of Christ, as they are clothed with the same garments, love, in all its branches, and with one heart and soul engaged in the same cause. When a professed Christian walks disorderly and is the cause of strife and contention in the church, he does not keep his garments, but so far puts them off. Hence the ground and necessity of Christian discipline, in the exercise of this love; in the total neglect of which Christians do not keep, but sully and

lose, their garments. And the Christian cannot wear or keep his garments without exercising benevolence to his fellow-men in general, by doing good to all men as he has opportunity.

In order to have a still more clear and full idea of the garments, and how he may keep or lose them, they must be considered as they consist in the armor by which he defends himself, maintains his ground, and obtains the victory, in his warfare with his enemies. In this view, the clothing necessary for a Christian as a soldier of Christ and engaged in a warfare under him, in which situation he is considered in the words before us, must be put on. This clothing is often mentioned in Scripture, but most particularly described by the apostle Paul, in the conclusion of his letter to the church at Ephesus, which ought to be often read, understood, and committed to memory, by every Christian. After describing the vast number, subtlety, and power of their invisible, spiritual enemies, he calls upon Christians to arm themselves, "to put on the whole armor of God," in order to withstand these enemies "in the evil day." The apostles and primitive Christians lived in an evil day, and all the days of Christians in every age since have been evil in a sense and degree greater or less. They had the devil, and all the men whom he is allowed to influence and stir up to hate and persecute them, to oppose. But the time in which we live, and is yet coming on, is in a peculiar sense and degree evil, as these evil spirits have a particular and large commission to go forth, and by their influence to stir up men in general, at least in the Christian world, in zealous and strong attempts against Christ, and to destroy Christianity and the church. And to what lengths they will be permitted to proceed, and what particular deeds, in their seeking to destroy Christians, they will be suffered to do, at present none can certainly know. It is enough for us to know that they will do what God has designed they shall, and proceed till they have filled the measure of their iniquity, and are completely ripe, and fitted for the destruction which shall come upon them in the battle of that great day; and that they are and shall be blessed who watch and keep their garments, having put on the whole armor of God. Since all this is true, there is a particular and loud call to all professed Christians to put on this armor, and be prepared for whatever is coming, even the worst, however sudden and unexpected it may come, and be unseen and not thought of, till sudden destruction come upon them, and they shall not escape.

Let Christians, then, stand, having their loins girt about with truth. By truth is meant that scheme and plan of

important, consistent, connected truth revealed in the Bible. This is often denominated *the truth*, in distinction from all error, and every scheme of doctrine which men have invented, or may or can invent, which, though they may contain some things which are true, yet there is so much error and falsehood mixed with it as to spoil the whole, and render it wholly inconsistent and ruinous. In opposition to this, the doctrines of revelation are called *the truth*, pure, important, saving truth, without any the least mixture of error. They who know and embrace this truth, and not any others, are and shall be saved. They only love the truth, walk in the truth, and by love are united to all who appear to know, love the truth, and walk in it. This is the truth of which Jesus Christ speaks when he says to Pilate, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth."

The apostle represents this truth by a girdle, by which a man girds himself and ties up his loose garments, by which he is fitted for action. The girdle was then considered as an essential part of clothing, especially for those who were engaged in warfare; and, in the case before us, fitly represents the truth, by which the Christian is strengthened, and all his garments are made tight, without which he cannot take one step. A proper girdle, to answer the end for strength and ornament, must consist of one sort of materials, strongly united together into one belt or string, without any chasm or weak place, by which it may become two, or fall into parts. So the truth by which the Christian is girded is perfectly connected together. The whole makes but one girdle; and one part cannot be taken out without spoiling the whole. If it be considered as composed of several links, all harmonious, and of one and the same sort, strongly connected and implying and depending upon each other; if one of the links be marred or broken and taken out, the girdle is marred and spoiled, and is not fit or capable of girding the loins of a Christian. If one essential truth of the gospel which is comprehended in the truth be denied or left out of the Christian's creed, it is not a Christian girdle, but, like the girdle which the prophet Jeremiah hid in a hole in a rock by Euphrates, it is marred, and good for nothing.*

* Numbers will say, "Many often speak of essential doctrines; but it has never yet been determined and agreed what these essential doctrines are; so that, to speak of essential truths, leaves the matter as vague and uncertain as ever; for none can tell, and Christians cannot agree to say what they are."

Answer. It may be asked, who they are who make this objection, and talk after this manner. Are they those who give proper and good evidence that they are born again of the Spirit of God and of truth? Do they appear to have

The apostle adds, "and having on the breastplate of righteousness." Here by righteousness is meant true holiness or uprightness of heart, by which the Christian is guarded and fortified against the assaults of Satan. This is indeed implied in having his loins girt about with truth, as every part of armor here mentioned is implied in the other, and each one really implies the whole, for one cannot be put on without the other. It is a whole armor; it all hangs together, as one whole. The

that holy love which they only exercise who are born of God, and by which alone they know God? The apostle John says, "He that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us." (1 John iv. 6, 7, 8.) And Christ says the same, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." (John xviii. 37.) They who are not of this character, but of the contrary, do not hear the voice of Christ, or the words of the apostles. They know not God. "They receive not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto them; neither can they know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Cor. ii. 14.) They hate the truth, and will not come to it. (John iii. 19, 20.) No wonder that such are in the dark, and cannot tell what is essential truth, or what is the truth.

But there have been thousands and millions who, being born again, have come to the knowledge of the truth, and have been united in embracing the truth and in what are the essential truths of the gospel. And there have been and are innumerable Christian churches who agree in a creed which they believe, and are sure, contains the essential truths contained in divine revelation, which are, in substance, the following: —

That there is one God, possessing all possible perfections, both natural and moral, which are infinite and unchangeable; consequently he is unchangeable in his will and designs or decrees, by which all things, from the greatest to the least, which should take place, were determined and fixed; and that perfectly consistent with the freedom of all moral agents.

That God subsists in a Trinity of three, called, in the Scripture, the Father, the Son, or the Word, and the Holy Spirit.

That mankind, who were made upright, have, in consequence of the sin of Adam, fallen into a state of total moral depravity, being dead in trespasses and sin.

That God has determined to save some, not all, of mankind, whom he has chosen out of the rest, and given them to the Son to be saved by him. That Christ, the Savior, is God manifest in the flesh, and has, by his suffering and obedience, made atonement for sin, and obtained that merit and righteousness by which sinners may be pardoned, justified, and saved, consistently with the righteous law and government of God. That the sinner who believes in Christ is justified by the righteousness of Christ, and not on account of any thing good and deserving in himself. That, in order to believe on Christ, men must be born again by the Spirit of God, which God of his sovereign grace effects in the hearts of the elect, who, being justified by faith, shall persevere in holiness to eternal life. That the law of God, requiring perfect obedience and holiness, is binding on all men, both saints and sinners, which none attain to in this life.

That there will be a resurrection of all the bodies both of the just and unjust, when all shall be judged by Christ, who will invite the former into his eternal kingdom, to be holy and happy forever, and will sentence the latter to everlasting punishment.

There are many truths not expressed, but implied, in the above creed; and numerous things which may be called appendages to it, in the knowledge of which the attentive, discerning Christian who embraces the foregoing fundamental doctrines will make advances, as he grows in grace and in the knowledge of his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

breastplate of righteousness, joined with the loins girded with truth, distinguishes the latter from that which is spurious and false. The apostle had spoken of those who "hold the truth in unrighteousness." He here speaks of directly the contrary, holding the truth in righteousness; which is, receiving it into an honest and good heart. Men may hold the truth, in some part of it, if not the whole, in speculation, while their hearts are neither good nor honest, but hate and oppose it. This is to hold it in unrighteousness, as they do not put on the breastplate of righteousness, neither are their loins girt about with truth.

The truth, as it has been explained, is hated and opposed by Satan and all wicked men. The rulers of the darkness of this world, and all their followers, hate this light, which is destructive to the kingdom of darkness, error, and delusion, which is the kingdom of the devil; which none can successfully oppose, unless their loins are girded about with truth.

It might not be unprofitable to proceed to mention and explain the other parts of the Christian armor specified by the apostle. But as this would swell this address beyond the proposed limits, it must be left to every serious Christian to examine and meditate on the whole of this important passage. One particular, however, here mentioned, must not be wholly passed over, which is *faith*, that faith which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen, which is represented as essential to the whole, and covering all the rest. This implies a firm and unshaken trust in the glorious Head of the church, in his power, wisdom, goodness, and truth; a hope and confidence that he will maintain his own cause, protect his church and friends, and lead them on to complete victory, and in the best time and manner defeat all his and their enemies, and turn all they have done or will do to his own advantage and the benefit of his church and kingdom. Were it not for this faith the Christian must sink into a spirit of despondency and heaviness; but in the exercise of this he puts on the garment of praise and joy, however much and long Satan and wicked men may seem to succeed, prevail, and prosper.

This subject will be concluded by a few cautions, directions, and motives to regard and obey these words of Christ, which are more applicable, and speak more directly to the professed Christians of this generation and those which shall follow, than to any who have lived heretofore.

1. Be concerned to be awake. Do not sleep as others, but watch and be sober, lest this day should overtake you as a thief. Watch against every the least deviation from the way of truth and duty. Look round you and see what others and

the world are doing, and maintain that love to Christ and concern for his honor and interest as shall produce a most lively and sensible feeling of every thing which is against him and his cause, and be ready to oppose it in all proper ways.

2. Take heed what doctrines you imbibe as true. Study the Bible with care and constancy. Be concerned to know and embrace the whole truth, which you can see through from beginning to the end; and though there be some things incomprehensible in it, yet you can see the whole to be perfectly consistent, and to form one connected chain, which cannot be broken, and with which you may safely gird up your loins.

There are many errors embraced and propagated at this day which are inconsistent with the connected chain of truth, which, if consistently followed, would land men in total infidelity and atheism. They who are asleep may be wholly insensible of this; but Christians ought to be awake, able to discern and guard against such errors. It would take too much room to particularize here, and mention all the errors which have this tendency, and show that they will land all those who embrace and consistently follow them in the darkness of atheism. But it may be of importance to mention one, which indeed is connected with many others. It is this: that the doctrines of the gospel are of so little importance that it is really no matter what men believe, if they do but live a moral life. It is easy to show that this is not only contrary to the whole Bible, but really sets it aside, as no better than Deism or atheism itself.

3. The world is a dangerous snare to Christians at all times, especially at this time, when Satan is with power and subtlety tempting men to worldly-mindedness, among other vices. So far as men are inclined to infidelity and immorality in general, they love the world, and the things of the world, and are eagerly pursuing the pleasures, profit, and honors of it. And, indeed, this is the leading vice, and the parent of all the rest. Christians cannot give way to this, and keep their garments unspotted by it. Their faith, if true and exercised with proper strength, will overcome the world. They cannot serve God and mammon. All their concerns with the things of the world are subordinated to the honor and cause of Christ, and wholly devoted to this; and, in their worldly business, they exercise as real religion in love to Christ, and acting for him and his interest, as in any of their acts of piety and devotion. He who lays aside his religion for a week, day, or one hour, that he may take care of and pursue his worldly concerns in any manner and shape whatever, is so far from keeping, that he puts off the Christian garment. And if he returns one day in the week, or at any

other time when his temporal affairs will admit, to some attention to religion, and practice of it, he is so far from putting on the Christian garments, that in the sight of him who has said, " Ye cannot serve God and mammon," it is nothing but deceit and mockery. Let Christians beware of this, would they keep their garments in this evil time.

4. Take heed of engaging and acting in political and civil concerns so as to weaken or counteract the cause of Christianity, or lose or abate your own religious exercises and zeal in the cause of Christ. We live in a time when this caution is peculiarly proper and necessary; when the public are greatly divided in their sentiments and conduct, and disputes and political contention rise very high, and are carried on with great heat and animosity. This is in itself but a temporal, worldly matter, and comparatively of small importance, so far as the interest of Christ and Christianity has no concern with it, and is not, in some respects, involved in it, which is not often the case. But when religion is connected with civil affairs, the Christian feels interested in them; but, as in all other worldly concerns, he subordinates them to this all-important interest. He will, therefore, be on that side in politics which, in his best and most mature judgment, will most promote the cause of Christ. And if he thinks his acting with either party will not tend to help this cause, he will sit still, and act on neither side. And if he thinks religion calls him to speak and act on one side, he will be calm and steady, and not join in the fierce contentions and unchristian words and actions of those of either party, but condemn and reprove them. When professed Christians are so engaged in politics as to subordinate the cause of religion to their political cause, and say and do that which tends to wound and sink Christianity, or when the cause itself which they espouse has evidently this tendency, they do not keep, but put off, their Christian garments. Therefore, let Christians take heed to themselves in this point.

Should the body or majority of the people of a community or nation become so corrupt and careless about the interest of Christianity as to join with professed infidels in choosing rulers who were known to be real enemies to Christianity, — which may be in fact the case under the sixth vial, which is now running, — could a Christian, in this case, watch and keep his garments, and yet join with them to promote and carry on this business? And if this man should attempt to excuse and justify himself by saying that political matters and religion are entirely distinct and different things, — therefore, while he acts in the former and joins with those who are attempting

to destroy the cause of the latter, he leaves the latter with a view to resume it when he has answered his political ends, — will not this make bad worse? Let the discerning Christian who watches and keeps his garments, judge.

This particular will be concluded by a quotation from Mr. Fuller, an English writer. In his preface to his book entitled "The Gospel its own Witness," he writes as follows: "One thing which has contributed to the advantage of infidelity is the height to which political disputes have arisen, and the degree in which they have interested the passions and prejudices of mankind. Those who favor the sentiments of a set of men in one thing, will be in danger of thinking favorably of them in others; at least, they will not be apt to view them in so bad a light as if they had been advanced by persons of different sentiments in other things, as well as in religion. It is true there may be nothing more friendly to infidelity in the nature of one political system than another; nevertheless, it becomes those who think favorably of the politieal principles of infidels to take heed, lest they be insensibly drawn away to think lightly of religion. All the nations of the earth, and all the disputes on the best or worst mode of government, compared with this, are less than nothing, and vanity.

"To this it may be added, that the eagerness with which men engage in political disputes, take which side they may, is unfavorable to a zealous adherence to the gospel. Any mere worldly object, if it becomes the principal thing which occupies our thoughts and affections, will weaken our attachment to religion. And if we once become cool and indifferent to this, we are in the high road to infidelity."

This address will be concluded by suggesting motives to pay special attention to these words of Christ, and carefully obey them.

1. Jesus Christ speaks in these remarkable words, particularly and most expressly to those who live in this day, as has been shown. Therefore, to disregard them now will be highly, and, in a peculiar degree, criminal and dangerous.

2. If you do not watch and keep your garments, consider the awful, the infinitely dreadful consequence. Christ will come upon you as a thief, and you shall not know what hour he will come. The consequence will be your suffering all the evils of this day, and final and everlasting destruction.

3. Many and great evils are fast coming on, and are even at the door, in which the church will partake and greatly suffer, even to a degree at present unknown. In the time of the prevalence of infidelity and immorality, and all kinds of vice which attend it, Christians must suffer many ways, and

endure great trials and temptations to turn aside and sin. And many calamities and divine judgments will take place before the sixth vial is ended, as a warning and anticipation of the battle which is coming on, as has been observed. In these, Christians must suffer, in a greater or less degree, with others. And they will, doubtless, come suddenly and unexpected to all who are not prepared to meet them by watching and keeping their garments.

And Christians have no warrant to conclude that persecution will not take place before the vial which is now running is out. And how soon and suddenly it will come on, none can tell. There is nothing in the volume of revelation which intimates that the church shall be no more persecuted, and that to a degree beyond any thing of the kind that has yet taken place. And there are some passages of Scripture which seem to foretell the contrary, some of which will be here mentioned. The prophet Jeremiah speaks of the sufferings of Jacob, that is, of the church of Christ, as peculiarly great in the time immediately previous to her deliverance and prosperity which Christ shall effect when he shall come to reign in the millennium. "Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it; it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it. For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off thy neck, and will burst thy bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him. But they shall serve the Lord their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them." (Jer. xxx. 4–9.) By *David* Christ is meant. This expression is frequently used by the prophets to denote the reign of Christ in the millennium. The same we may understand as predicted. (Dan. xii. 1.) This is expressed by Zechariah: "Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee; for I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished, and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall the Lord go forth and fight against these nations, as when he fought in the day of battle." (Zech. xiv. 1–3.)

Who can attentively read this passage, with what follows, without perceiving that in this prediction there is reference to the same events which are foretold under the sixth and seventh vials in the Revelation? When it is said, "half of the city shall go forth into captivity," the meaning probably is, that the false professors in the church, which is meant by Jerusalem,

shall, in the time of persecution, fall away, and join the enemy. The rest, who keep their garments, shall be saved.

These passages of Scripture, and others which might be mentioned, seem to indicate that the time of the greatest sufferings of the church is yet to come, and is fast approaching, and even at the door. There is nothing in the present state or disposition of mankind that is the least security against this, but much to the contrary. What has taken place in Europe the last century, and in a few years past, and is now progressing there, and even in America, is an evidence of this. Unbelievers, of whom there are many, think and say they have found out that Christianity has been the source of most of the evils which mankind suffer, and they cannot be happy until Christianity and Christians are wholly suppressed and destroyed. Nothing can prevent their attempting this, by practising the most cruel and horrid persecution of Christians that has ever yet been known, unless restrained from it by God, which there is no reason to expect, but the contrary, from the prophecy in the Revelation which has been considered, and those just now mentioned.

This may be necessary as a means to purge the visible church of the many and great corruptions in doctrine and practice which have been introduced and do continue, and to detect and exclude the many false professors, and to purify and render real Christians more holy, and so prepared for that more perfect state which shall commence with the millennium. It is predicted, and probably respects this very time, that "many shall be purified and made white and tried." (Dan. xii. 10.) When Christ shall come in this way, he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and who shall stand when he appeareth? None but those who watch and keep their garments.

4. The sure and only way to be blessed, is to watch and keep your garments. This is the only way. This is implied in these words of Christ, as has been observed. And that it is a sure way, is as certain as it is that Christ himself spake these words. And it is implied that they shall be in a peculiar manner and degree blessed, who, in this day of great temptation and suffering, are faithful to Christ, and persevere in adherence to him and his cause through great opposition and trials.

AN INQUIRY

CONCERNING

THE PROMISES OF THE GOSPEL;

WHETHER ANY OF THEM ARE MADE TO

THE EXERCISES AND DOINGS OF PERSONS IN AN UNREGENERATE STATE.

CONTAINING

REMARKS ON TWO SERMONS PUBLISHED BY DR. MAYHEW, OF BOSTON,

ENTITLED "STRIVING TO ENTER IN AT THE STRAIT GATE EXPLAINED AND INCULCATED, AND THE CONNECTION OF SALVATION THEREWITH PROVED FROM THE HOLY SCRIPTURE."

ALSO,

A BRIEF INQUIRY INTO THE USE OF MEANS;

SHOWING THEIR NECESSITY IN ORDER TO SALVATION, AND WHAT IS THE TRUE GROUND OF ENCOURAGEMENT FOR SINNERS DILIGENTLY TO ATTEND ON THEM.

"Great men are not always wise."—ELIHU.

PREFACE.

As the sermons remarked upon in the following sheets were published in Boston in the year 1761, it may be a question why no reply has been made to them long before this time, seeing the doctor has therein attempted to establish a doctrine so directly contrary to the sentiments and preaching of many divines in New England. To this, the author of what follows has only to say, that the sermons had been long published before he got sight of them. After this he waited, hoping and expecting that some able hand would undertake an answer. But when he despaired of this, he turned his thoughts this way, and has employed his first leisure hours in attending to the subject; the result of which, imperfect as it is, is now offered to the public. And none, it is hoped, will think it is ever too late to defend the truth.

But what need, may it be said, of entering into this controversy at all? If the author had a desire to publish his thoughts upon this subject, he had an undoubted right to do it; but what call was there to engage in a formal controversy with Dr. Mayhew? If the truth is vindicated by solid arguments, what has been said against it will fall, of course. There was no occasion, therefore, of making a formal attack upon the doctor's performance; this must proceed from too great a forwardness to run into controversy, of which little good comes, and often much hurt.

Answer. As this objection is against the common practice of Christian writers, from the early days of Christianity to this time, and the men most noted for wisdom and piety, yea, Dr. Mayhew himself among the rest, the author thinks himself sufficiently kept in countenance by their example.

Besides, does not this appear to be the most proper and effectual way, in many cases at least, to detect error and vindicate the truth? If errors are broached, and contended for by plausible arguments, how can they be detected, and the truth set in an advantageous light, but by particularly showing the fallacy of the pretended argument? If error is openly pleaded for, it tends to hurt the public, and lead many astray. And what likelier method can there be taken to prevent the mischief, than by particularly showing how ill grounded and absurd the arguments are with which it is supported, and pointing out the book in which they are found? If poison is publicly sold and spread among the people under pretence of its being a wholesome food, a true friend to mankind would not content himself with pointing out the real qualities of good food, but would discover the poison of that which pretended to be such, and tell them where it was, that they might be under advantage to see for themselves, and avoid the danger.

Controversy, it must be acknowledged, is too often managed in an unfair manner, and with unchristian heat and bitterness, and many times is diverted from fair reasoning on the point to be disputed into personal quarrel and invectives. This can by no means be justified; but it may, and often has been managed greatly to the advantage of truth. It were easy to show that this has been one special and principal means of the maintenance and increase of light and truth in the Christian church. One great end of God, in suffering men of an uncommon genius to run into error, and spend their lives in hard study and labor, in order to maintain and propagate their tenets and oppose the truth, it seems, has been to awaken the attention of men hereby, especially of the friends of truth; that, by a close and thorough examination of the matter, the error may appear in all its weakness and inconsistency, and the opposite truth be set in a more clear and convincing light than it could be, had it never been opposed. To be sure, that this has in fact been the event of controversy and dispute, in many instances, none can doubt, who have been in any measure attentive to the state of the Christian church. And the dispute that arises on such occasions is the means of awaken-

ing the attention of multitudes, by which they are the more prepared to receive conviction of the truth, when it shines forth bright and victorious. When opponents are engaged in a doctrinal controversy, not only the love of truth, their zeal for God and his cause, but their own personal interest and honor, will be a powerful motive to study and search out the matter, and vindicate their cause in the best manner they can. And bystanders who are properly attentive and disposed to embrace the truth wherever it appears will hereby be under special advantage to get instruction; for it would be a wonder if some new light is not struck up by this means, even though the controversy should not be managed every way in the best manner.

What Dr. Mayhew says to this point is worthy to be attended to here. Speaking of those who greatly dislike controversy and disputes on matters of religion, he says, "A third sort are those good men who sincerely love and practise religion themselves, but yet are such great lovers of peace, of such a timid make, and so apprehensive of the bad effects of contention, that they think it best never to enter into debates on religion, or any thing relative to it, on any occasion, and condemn those who do so, as at best imprudent and ill-advised persons. But surely there may be just and sufficient cause for disputing, if religion itself is of any great importance. We are enjoined to contend earnestly for the faith." It may be added, the more earnestly we contend the better, if it be with Christian meekness and humility. If those good, peaceable gentlemen, who are so greatly averse to, and disgusted with, all controversy, were universally hearkened to, most of the important doctrines of Christianity would soon be given up, or lost in darkness and ignorance.

If any should be inclined to think that the point here controverted is not of importance enough to require any great ado about it, and is a sufficient reason against entering into a public debate upon it, they are desired to consider that the question in dispute really is, What is the condition on which men may obtain salvation? or, What must men do in order to be interested in God's favor, and have a title to eternal life?

This is, therefore, the most interesting question that can be thought of; and it is of the greatest importance to all that they make no mistake here, but have a right understanding of the matter; for surely nothing in religion is of greater importance than that which teaches us how we may be saved. If salvation itself is of infinite importance, then it is of equal importance that we do not mistake the terms on which it is to be obtained. What we chiefly want a revelation from God for is, to teach us the terms of his favor, or the way of salvation. And since a revelation is given chiefly to this end, shall we think it a matter of so little importance as that it is not worth while to inquire into it, or contend for what we think to be the truth of the matter?

Dr. Mayhew thinks what he contends for to be the sum of the glad tidings of the gospel. Consequently, in his view, they do not preach nor understand the gospel who oppose him in this point. He therefore thinks it of great importance that it should be received. It is granted to be so, if it is the truth; if it is not, it is of the last importance to him and all others that they should be sensible of it, and embrace directly the contrary, as truth, which doubtless appears as greatly important to those who are now established in it. They therefore may be allowed to contend earnestly for it.

But however just and important this controversy may be, it is surely not well timed, some will say. Dr. Mayhew is now engaged in a good and important cause, in his controversy with the Episcopal party in New England. An appearance against him at this time may give some advantage to his other opponents, and tend to weaken his hands. At least, this attack, at this time, looks unfriendly to the important and noble cause he has espoused.

Answer. That the cause the doctor is engaged in is important and noble, the author readily acknowledges, and is not a little pleased that a gentleman of his abilities and advantages has undertaken it. He certainly deserves the thanks of his country for what he has done in this matter; and doubtless has the thanks of all the true friends to the interest of religion, not excepting even those of the church of England, who have

impartiality and candor enough to attend to the true state of the case. The author is willing the world should know that he wishes and prays that an end may be put to the erecting of Episcopal missions in New England, in the manner it has been done for so long a time; by which, he has not the least doubt, not the cause of Christianity, but directly the opposite, has been greatly promoted. He sincerely wishes the doctor may have the honor and happiness of being an instrument of this, and would therefore be sorry to do any thing that should tend to prevent it.

But if the doctor should appear to be wrong in one instance, this is no argument that he is so in all others; and an attempt to set him right, wherein he is thought to have made a mistake, is an act of friendship to him. It is also, perhaps, worthy of remark, that the tenet in which the doctor is opposed in the following inquiry is exactly agreeable to most, if not all, of the Episcopal party in New England; so that he herein falls in with those he opposes in the controversy mentioned. The author, therefore, in opposing the doctor here, equally opposes those whom he appears against. How then does he strengthen them, and weaken the doctor's hands? May it not be truly said, that if the doctor should be convinced of his mistake in this instance, (if it is one,) and espouse the contrary doctrine, he would be under better advantages in this controversy than now he is? It is well known what a noise most of the doctor's antagonists have made about his heterodoxy. If he had been quite orthodox, according to the faith of our pious forefathers in New England, they would not have had this handle, however sincerely they now use it.

The author thinks the doctor worthy of esteem and honor, for his many excellent talents, his close application and diligence in his study, his easy, happy, masterly way of expressing his sentiments, &c.; but all this is, in his view, rather a reason why the doctor should be corrected, if he errs in any important point; for such an error in him will, of course, be more hurtful and fatal to mankind than in another. If his own conviction of his mistake would have been a sufficient remedy of this evil, application would have been made to

him only; but as the case stands, a public confutation seems necessary.

The doctor, without doubt, thought his arguments conclusive, and that he was doing service to God and his church, in vindicating, in the best manner he could, what appeared to him important truth. And he may, perhaps, think what is here offered to him and the public is weak and inconclusive; if so, the author does not expect to be contemned or neglected, but that the doctor will be so just to himself, and good to the public, as fairly, and with Christian meekness, to vindicate his scheme from the exceptions here taken, and show that they are indeed without foundation. If he should be convinced that he has made a mistake, it is concluded, from his known disposition to be frank and open, that he will freely confess it. However that may be, the author, at present, rests in the goodness of his cause, and cheerfully commits it to Him who is able to plead it most effectually in his own way and time.

The tenth section is more than was at first designed; but finding what was said on the subject would naturally lead to the question there considered, and it being an important one, and one about which there is perhaps more inquiry and dispute now than there ever has been before, though little or nothing has been published upon it, it was thought best not wholly to pass it in silence. The author is far from thinking the subject is exhausted, or that it may not be set in a far more clear and convincing light. If any serious readers, who have been in any degree of darkness and uncertainty with respect to this question, shall by what is there said get any light, and if these hints shall be a help and excitement to any who are making this the subject of their inquiry to pursue the matter, so as to throw greater light upon it, the utmost that is expected will be answered. If the author has made any dangerous mistake on this head, and it shall be pointed out by some wise, judicious pen he will most gladly stand corrected before the world.

April 8th, 1765.

AN INQUIRY

CONCERNING

THE PROMISES OF THE GOSPEL.

SECTION I.

The Text on which Dr. Mayhew grounds his Discourse considered. His Inconsistency with himself, in his Way of explaining it, shown.

The words the doctor has chosen as the ground of his discourse now under consideration, are those of our Savior, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." (Luke xiii. 24.) This text has been differently understood. Some suppose that by the strait gate is meant the entrance upon a holy life, or getting into the narrow way which leads to eternal life; which is the same that is commonly called conversion, or the new birth. And by striving to enter in at this gate, they understand the exercises and endeavors of the unregenerate, which are antecedent to their conversion. But few or none who understand the text thus suppose there is any certain connection between the striving here exhorted to and saving conversion, or that there is any promise made to this striving.

Others suppose that by the strait gate our Savior means, in general, the entrance into heaven or eternal life.* And then by striving to enter at this gate is meant a keeping the commandments of God, or the holy exercises of true saints, by which they walk in the way to heaven, fight the fight of faith, and so lay hold on eternal life. And in support of this last interpretation, and as an evidence that striving, in the text, does not mean the unholy exercises and endeavors of those whose hearts are wholly under the dominion of sin, but the

* See Dr. Dodd. and Poli Syn. on the text.

holy exercises and strivings of the godly, it may be observed, that the word in the original translated *strive*, when used in other places in the New Testament, as it is often, always denotes the exercises and labor of true Christians in their way to heaven. And no good reason, perhaps, can be given why it should not be understood in the same sense here. When St. Paul says to Timothy, "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life," he speaks to an eminently good man; and therefore it must be understood as an exhortation resolutely to persevere in a Christian course. But the word in the original, here translated *fight*, is the same used by the evangelist in the text under consideration.* The same words St. Paul uses, concerning himself, to denote the Christian course he had gone through. "I have fought the good fight." And he makes use of the same word, in his First Epistle to the Corinthians, with reference to the exercises of true Christians, by which they go in the way to heaven. "And every one that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible." And he denotes his own exercises as a servant of Christ, by the same word. "Whereunto I also labor, striving according to his working, which he worketh in me mightily."

It may be noted here, that the word in the original, in all these places, was most commonly used by the Greeks to denote the exercises and labor of those who were candidates for the prize set up in the Olympic games: for instance, the vigorous exertion of those who ran a race in order to obtain the prize set up for him who should outrun. And as these games in which they ran for the prize, etc., were a fit emblem of the exercises of the Christian life, it is frequently represented by them; and hence the word used for those exercises is applied to the Christian, to signify the exercises and labor by which he strives for eternal life. And the Christian course is called a race, or *agony*, in allusion to the same thing. (Heb. xii. 1.†) According to this, to strive to enter in at the strait gate of eternal life, or to agonize in order hereunto, is to agonize the good agony, so as to lay hold on eternal life, to run the Christian race, the way of true holiness, which is set before us; and is the same which Christ exhorts to when he says, "Enter ye in at the strait gate." (Matt. vii. 14.) But let it be observed, that the question now in dispute does not turn upon the interpretation of this text; for, let it be understood in either of the

* *Ἀγωνίζου τὸν καλὸν ἀγῶνα*, (agonize the good agony.) 1 Tim. vi. 12.

† Let us run the race. In the original, the *agony*. The race itself is called the agony; the running is agonizing.

senses above mentioned, it makes nothing for the doctor's promises to the doings of the unregenerate. Only let it be remembered, that if by the strait gate is meant the gate of eternal life, as the doctor understands it, striving to enter in must intend a walking in the narrow way of holiness; and then it stands directly against him. This leads me to consider the doctor's interpretation.

By the strait gate, the doctor understands the gate of heaven, or "the gate of eternal life and happiness." But, contrary to most, if not all others, who suppose this to be the meaning of the strait gate, and in direct contradiction to himself, as will be seen presently, he understands striving to enter in at this gate to mean the endeavors and doings of the unregenerate, who are wholly without all true holiness. To these unholy exercises and doings of the unregenerate, he insists the promises of regenerating grace and salvation are made; and by these, he supposes, however absurdly, they go in the way to heaven, and enter in through the gates into that holy city.

The doctor indeed supposes that the words may be considered as a precept, given "both to those who are and who are not already in a regenerate state." If so, then they are a command which enjoins both the unholy endeavors of the wicked and the godly exercises of the true Christian. The doctor's argument for this is in the following words: "For be they in that happy estate or not, still they ought to use their utmost diligence to obtain the salvation revealed in the gospel, or, which is the same thing, to enter in at the strait gate." It is true that all ought to enter in at the strait gate, (taking the gate in the doctor's sense of it;) and in order to this, they ought to be real Christians and to live a holy life. And in this view, the command to enter in at this gate is enjoined upon all, whether regenerate or not; as all are under indispensable obligations to strive in this manner, in the exercise of true holiness. If the precept to strive to enter in at the strait gate enjoins on Christians earnestly to seek eternal life in the way of true holiness, or in keeping the commandments of God, then it enjoins the same on wicked men, and points out the very same way for them to obtain eternal life in as for true saints, and not another and quite different one; as it must do, if it only requires of them those doings which have nothing of the nature of true holiness, and are therefore different in nature and kind from what the true Christian is directed to; they having no more likeness, relation, and connection, than godliness and ungodliness. If, on the other hand, when wicked men are commanded to enter in at the strait gate of eternal life, no more is intended than what they may do, and yet be

unholy in heart and life, then no more is intended by the same command to the regenerate; for doubtless the command requires the same thing of one as of another; and if so, they may enter into eternal life without any true holiness; for the command to enter in surely requires all that is necessary in order to enter in. But none, I trust, will assert that the unholy and unclean can, while such, enter in through the gates into the heavenly city.

The doctor repeatedly says there is but one way of life and salvation, and challenges any one, who shall say there are two or more, to point them out, and show the difference there is betwixt them; and yet that both are true and right, the ways of God's revealing. It seems the doctor himself is the man who has found out two ways to life and salvation, viz., the way of the unholy and unclean, and the way of true virtue and holiness, in which they go who turn their feet unto God's testimonies. But what is most remarkable is, that he insists upon it that these two different ways are pointed out and enjoined by one and the same command. And now we must wait on him to show the difference, and tell what the command enjoins on one which it does not on the other.

But if we attend to the doctor's description of striving to enter in at the strait gate, we shall find that it is not only inconsistent with its intending only the endeavors of the unregenerate, (which it must, if the words were to his purpose,) but is also not consistent with their being at all intended or included in this striving; it being, according to him, only applicable to the exercises and doings of real Christians. When the doctor was giving this description, he seems to have in a measure forgot the point he chiefly contends for, and gives such an account of striving, etc., as is by no means compatible to the unregenerate, and so really inconsistent with what he was about to prove. The reader must judge of the justice of this remark, when he has attended to what follows.

To strive to enter in at the strait gate is, according to the doctor, to go in the narrow way which leadeth to life, and is opposed to the broad way leading to destruction. For he says, "If we are not in the narrow way, we are of consequence travelling towards the wide gate of destruction." But this narrow way is undoubtedly the way of holiness, if any such way is spoken of in Holy Scripture; the way of God's commands, in distinction from all the crooked ways of sinners, the way of the upright, who keep the commandments of God, and so enter in through the gates into life.

As all men are in Scripture comprehended in two opposite characters, between which there is no medium, viz., the good

and the evil, the righteous and the ungodly, the children of God and the children of the devil, so there are but two different and opposite ways spoken of in which they are going, viz., "the way of the righteous, and the way of the ungodly." (Ps. i. 6.) The broad way which leadeth to destruction, and the narrow way which leadeth to life, or to the gate through which the righteous enter into life. This latter is often spoken of in Scripture. It is called "the way everlasting." (Ps. cxxxix. 24.) "The way of life." (Pr. xv. 24.) "The way of wisdom." (Pr. iv. 11.) "The way of righteousness," or holiness. (Pr. viii. 2.) "The way of good men." (Pr. ii. 20.) "The path of the just." (Pr. iv. 18.) "The way of God's saints." (Pr. ii. 8.) The way of the undefiled, who walk in the law of the Lord. (Ps. cxix. 1.) The way of God's commandments. (Ps. v. 32.) The way of holiness, in which, not the unclean, but the redeemed only are found. (Isa. xxxv. 8, 9.) Now, can any one, who attends to the scriptural account of this matter, think that the narrow way which Christ speaks of as leading to life is not the way of true holiness, but the way in which the unregenerate, the unholy and ungodly, walk?

Again: he speaks of striving as "the way of truth, righteousness, and life." This surely is not the way of the ungodly, but of the righteous, or those who love and practise the truth.

Moreover, he says, "Unless we strive in general, in the manner we ought to do, allowing for involuntary mistakes, we are not in the way that leadeth unto life." The doctor himself will not deny, I trust, that all under the gospel *ought* to be true Christians, and live a holy life, and in this manner to seek the salvation of their souls; consequently, if persons strive as they ought to do, they strive in this manner. Therefore, any striving short of this falls short of what is commanded, so is not connected with, or the way to, eternal life. In this one sentence, the doctor has shut all wicked or unregenerate men out of the way which leadeth to life, and represented striving to enter in at the strait gate to be what they never attain to.

He also speaks of *striving*, as that by which persons overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil, principalities and powers, and spiritual wickednesses in high places. But he who does this is surely a true Christian, a regenerate, holy person, if such a one is any where spoken of in the Bible. The true followers of Christ, or real Christians, are very often characterized and distinguished from all others by this, that they overcome. And St. John expressly says, that none over-

come the world but they who are born of God. (John v. 4, 5, compared with verse 1.) St. Paul speaks of it as the great work of the Christian to stand his ground against principalities and powers, etc., and directs to put on the whole armor of God, as necessary in order to this; which none who read the description he gives of it can think is ever complied with by the unregenerate. (Eph. vi. 10., etc.)

Further, the doctor says, "A dependence upon Christ, as Mediator between God and man, is implied in the very notion of striving to obtain salvation through him;" and that it comprehends a "relying, not on any supposed merit in what we do, but on the mercy of God in Christ, for acceptance with him." Now, this is the very thing by which God's people or true saints are in Scripture distinguished from all others, as that in which true godliness consists; and by it is evidently meant that faith, saving, precious, holy faith of God's elect, which is peculiar to good men, and by which the just do live. They who hope in the mercy of God, and trust in him, are repeatedly spoken of as the blessed people of God, to whom all divine promises are made. (Ps. xiii. 5; xxxiii. 18; cxlvii. 11; xxxi. 19; xxxiv. 22; cxxv. 1, etc.) St. Paul speaks of trusting in Christ as that which was peculiar to true saints, and the same with saving faith. (Eph. i. 12, 13.)

The doctor also speaks of his *strivers*, as "those who take Jesus Christ for their guide, and heartily desire to know the truth as it is in him. He speaks of this as necessary, in order to be secure from fatal error. This, therefore, implies a receiving the love of the truth; for they who do not so are liable to be given up to strong delusion, according to St. Paul's account of the matter. (2. Thess. ii. 10, 11.) But to receive the love of the truth, is to love the truth. And what is this but to love God and holiness? which is the same with exercising holiness. To take Jesus Christ for our guide, is to submit to him, and trust in him, in his character of a teacher or prophet, which supposes a heart friendly to Christ, and is really a hearty embracing the gospel. For he who heartily submits to, and trusts in Christ, or cordially acknowledges him in any part of his true character, is really reconciled to the whole of it. And this is the same thing with being reconciled to God through Jesus Christ, or embracing the gospel. But this surely is not the character of the unregenerate.

Another passage of the doctor's is in the following words: "Our Savior, who certainly knew every thing relating to this affair, enjoins us to strive, or, if the word may be allowed, to agonize, that we may enter into life; plainly importing that the business of religion is at once of such vast

importance, and attended with such difficulties, as to call for the most anxious concern, the most fixed resolutions, and unwearied endeavors. And there are divers metaphors used in Scripture relative to this matter, which naturally suggest the same thing to us — particularly those of wrestling, running, and fighting, which express efforts of strength and activity, joined with wariness and circumspection. These are all applied to the exercises, duties, and employments of the Christian life." What could he have said more to the purpose, if he had undertaken to prove that striving to enter in at the strait gate intends not the doings of the unregenerate, but the exercises and work of the real Christian? He has, at least, strongly asserted this here, however inconsistent with his main design. If the doctor had been as sensible of this as, perhaps, he ought, he could have proceeded no further, as he must have seen the impropriety of applying that *striving* to the doings of the unregenerate, which, according to his own account of the matter, denotes the character and exercises of those only who are born of God.

He appears, indeed, not wholly unthoughtful of this matter, for, upon a review of his description of striving to enter in at the strait gate, he has these words: "If it should be asked whether any unregenerate sinner can be supposed to strive in the manner represented above, I answer, Yes; at least, in general. There is very little, if any thing, in this account of striving, which would necessarily suppose a person to be already born of the Spirit of God." And again, he says, "Possibly one or two expressions used in that description are in strictness applicable to the regenerate only, though I am not at present sensible of any such." It seems to be a pity, as well as somewhat strange, that he was not sensible that not only one or two expressions, but a considerable number, are applicable only to the endeavors of the regenerate; and that his whole description, taken together, is properly applicable to none but such — for this would most probably have undeceived him with respect to this whole affair. For I trust it will appear, in the sequel, that the doctor has, through his whole performance, exalted the unregenerate and their doings too high; and in order to support what he contends for, has represented them as having those exercises which indeed they never have, but are peculiar to the regenerate; and that most of his arguments take all their seeming strength and plausibleness from this.

But what if "very little," and but "one or two expressions used in that description, are in strictness applicable to the regenerate only"? This is certainly a little too much, and

renders him so far inconsistent with himself; which no man chooses to be, if he can help it. For he has declared that not to strive in the manner he has described is fatal, and connected with a being forever excluded the kingdom of heaven; by which he has at one stroke cut off all connection of the doings of the unregenerate with salvation, and landed them in despair; which connection he nevertheless thinks he has proved to a demonstration. His words are these: "I was in the next place to show you the fatal consequences of not striving to enter in at the strait gate; or, in other words, of not using your endeavors to obtain eternal life in the manner represented above." If the fatal consequences which he goes on to mention will certainly follow on their not striving in the manner represented above, and if any thing comes into the description of that striving which no unregenerate persons attain to, but is peculiar to the regenerate, then the unregenerate do not strive or use their endeavors to obtain eternal life in that manner, and consequently do nothing which will prevent these fatal consequences coming on them; and therefore nothing which has any certain connection with eternal life, but rather with everlasting destruction. So that if the doctor has, after all this, proved that any of the endeavors of the unregenerate are connected with eternal life, he has done it contrary to his own express assertion, if but *very little* that is peculiar to the regenerate comes into the manner of the endeavors to obtain salvation which he has described. But if very much which comes into his account of striving to enter in at the strait gate necessarily supposes a person to be born of the Spirit of God, which I trust appears beyond contradiction, this makes his inconsistency with himself still more glaring.

However, though the doctor's text, as he understands it, seems to be rather against him and his own description of striving, is inconsistent with his whole scheme, and is, the whole taken together, in direct contradiction to the point he endeavors, by fourteen arguments, to prove, — yet, if he has, after all this, rightly stated, and undeniably proved it, we must yield it to him, however inconsistent he is with himself.

I therefore now proceed to inquire into this matter.

SECTION II.

The Doctor's stating the Question examined.

The doctor states the question in dispute three different times, in different words. But it may be queried whether he has stated it properly, or in any degree right, in either of his attempts. He first puts it in the following words: "Whether there are, in the Word of God, any gracious promises, invitations, or declarations, respecting unregenerate sinners, to whom the gospel is preached, from whence it may be clearly inferred, that if they strive, *in the manner they may and ought to do*, to attain to holiness and eternal life, God will certainly afford them all the influences of his Spirit and grace which are necessary to that end; so that their endeavors shall not be in vain, but succeeded by him, and rendered effectual to their salvation." "This," the doctor says, "it is humbly conceived, is a fair, just, and plain state of the important question proposed." Doubtless he thought so. But what does he mean by unregenerate sinners' striving in the manner they may and ought to do? They ought to strive, as true saints do, in a holy manner. This the doctor himself acknowledges; for he says, that "all who hear the gospel are required, not only to believe it, but to repent of their sins, and to become the true disciples of Jesus Christ." If they are required to repent, then they may and ought to repent, and become true disciples of Christ, and therefore may and ought to strive in the exercise of true repentance, and as real Christians. And if so, then the question, as the doctor has put it, comes to this — whether, if unregenerate sinners become true penitents and real Christians, and as such, in the exercise of true faith and holiness, strive to obtain the salvation of their souls, they are hereby entitled to a divine promise of success.

The question, therefore, as the doctor has stated it, is not disputed by those whom he means to oppose. For they all allow, that if unregenerate sinners strive as they may and ought to do, they shall certainly obtain salvation. But, at the same time, they may and ought to strive in a right manner, i. e., as real penitents and true Christians; and the doctor is so happy as to agree with them in this too. Where is the dispute, then? We can have none with him on this question; for we hold the affirmative as fully as he can. And now, whether this is a "fair, just, and plain state of the important question proposed," let the impartial judge. The doctor knew, or ought to have known, that they whom he meant to oppose

hold that no unregenerate sinner strives for salvation as he may and ought to do; and if he had believed the contrary, he ought not to take it for granted, in stating the question to be disputed; for this, instead of putting the question in a fair, just, and plain light, is really begging the question. But as he does not himself believe that unregenerate sinners ever strive thus, but has affirmed they do not, this, his state of the question, is not only not fair or just, but somewhat surprising. The question really is, whether unregenerate sinners, while they do nothing but what is consistent with a state of unregeneracy, i. e., reigning wickedness of heart, do ever so strive for salvation, as that, by their thus striving, they are entitled to those gracious promises whereby God is engaged to bestow eternal life upon them.

But let us see if the doctor has succeeded better in his second attempt. This is in the following words: "Whether the gracious declarations and promises of God in his word are such as will, in any measure, admit of the supposition that unregenerate sinners, to whom the gospel is preached, may desire, strive, and earnestly endeavor, in the use of proper means, to obtain the salvation revealed therein, seeking to God for his grace and assistance; and yet possibly fall short of eternal life, and perish in their sins, by reason that God withholds his Spirit and grace from them." He thinks, "the question, thus stated, comes precisely to the same thing as in the former way." Perhaps it does; but if so, then the matter is not mended, and the question is still far from being rightly stated, as has been shown. All the difficulty in this state of the question lies in the word *desire*. If he uses this word in the sense in which it is commonly used, we shall all agree with him, and allow that the gracious declarations and promises of God in his word are such as will not admit of the supposition that they who desire the salvation revealed in the gospel can possibly fall short of eternal life. This, therefore, is not the question in dispute. The promises of the gospel are, beyond question, made to all who heartily desire the things promised. But then we assert that no unregenerate person does really and heartily desire these things. But of this, more hereafter.

The doctor goes on to say, "It may be reduced to another form, and still narrower compass, thus, viz., whether unregenerate sinners, under the dispensation of the gospel, have any day of grace and salvation afforded them, in such a sense that they shall certainly obtain eternal life, provided they heartily desire it and strive to that end." Still we are all agreed; none, I trust, will deny this.

He says he has expressed the true point in question in these several ways, not merely for the sake of having it understood, but partly because he supposed that the bare stating it thus would go a considerable ways towards a proper resolution of it with those who are tolerably acquainted with the general tenor of the Holy Scripture, unless their minds are unhappily prepossessed in favor of some unscriptural scheme of systematic divinity. If he has, indeed, expressed the true point in question, it appears to be easily resolved, from what has been observed; for nobody seems to have any dispute with him. But that he should imagine this to be the true point in question, and that what he here fixes upon as the condition of the promises of the gospel is ever come up to by unregenerate sinners, must, I think, be owing to his not being tolerably acquainted with the general tenor of Holy Scripture; unless, perhaps, his mind is unhappily prepossessed in favor of some unscriptural scheme of *un*systematical divinity. But this will be more particularly considered by and by.

Thus it appears that the whole matter in dispute is, in the doctor's way of stating the question, overlooked, or, rather, taken for granted; for, if unregenerate sinners ever actually do what he supposes they must do in order to have an interest in the promises, without question promises of salvation are made to their doings. But that unregenerate men ever do thus, lies on the doctor to prove, which he has not so much as attempted any where; but as he has taken it for granted, in stating the question, he has done so through his whole performance; and, from beginning to end, entirely misstated the matter, and really begged the whole question in dispute.

I will now take leave to give what appears to me to be a fair, just, and plain state of this important question before us.

Question. Are there any gracious promises of salvation to the exercises and doings of unregenerate sinners, who do not strive for salvation as they ought to do; who have no true and hearty desires of the salvation offered in the gospel, but are so far from it that they are under the reigning power of enmity against God and the Savior, and do with their whole heart oppose the way of salvation opened in the gospel, and continually reject the salvation itself, and obstinately refuse to have any part therein, notwithstanding it is freely offered to their choice and acceptance? The bare stating the question thus, I suppose, will go a considerable way towards a proper solution of it, even with all. The doctor himself, I presume, will fully and cheerfully espouse the negative of this question, thus stated. But then he may, perhaps, complain that the true point in question is not expressed, or at least is not fairly

stated, because the exercises and doings of unregenerate sinners are not justly represented, and that is taken for granted, in this state of the case, which he shall dispute, and really is the only thing in question. But would not such a complaint be really against himself, while the same objection lies against his own state of the question? I say, the doctor has raised the unregenerate man too high, and represented him as doing more than ever he does. On the other hand, he says I sink him too low, and represent all his exercises and doings in much too bad a light. Who does not see that I have as good a right to take for granted what I assert of the doings of the unregenerate man as he has what he has asserted? All must see, I think, by this time, that in order to understand and settle the question before us, it must be first determined what can be justly predicated of the doings of unregenerate sinners; and that a just solution of this will put an end to the dispute. If it can be proved that the doctor's unregenerate sinner is a creature only of his own fancy,—a kind of monster, an enemy to God, dressed up in the attire of a saint, a contradiction almost, in terms,—then all he has said and attempted to prove of such a one is really nothing to the purpose. Here then we must join issue, and leave it to the world to judge who is on the right side of the question.

SECTION III.

In which it is considered what is meant by DESIRING SALVATION; *and how far, and in what Sense, unregenerate Persons may be said to do so.*

THE doctor often speaks of sinners desiring salvation. With relation to this, he uses the word *desire* above thirty times in this argument. He calls it a sincere desire, a real and a hearty desire. This is a word of great importance with him. According to him, they who do not heartily and earnestly desire salvation do not strive for it so as to obtain, and so are not in the way to it. And, on the other hand, he often speaks of this desire of salvation as that which will not, cannot fail of success; as if it was the only necessary condition, on the sinner's part, to which all the promises in the gospel are made. And most of his arguments derive all their force and strength from this word. It is proper, therefore, in the first place, particularly to attend to this, and enter into the true meaning of it; otherwise we may dispute altogether in the dark.

Since the doctor makes so much of this word, and speaks

so often of a hearty desire of salvation, and builds so much upon it, it might have been expected that he would have given such a plain definition of this phrase, and so explained the matter, that none could be left at a loss about his meaning. But this he has not done; we must therefore find out his meaning as well as we can, by considering the various passages in which he uses these words, together with what they are connected. It is plain, at first view, that he means to speak of the desires of unregenerate persons; but the question is, whether he means only those desires of salvation which are indeed compatible to an unregenerate man, or something which is never found with such, however he may suppose it, but is peculiar to the regenerate.

By desiring salvation, or eternal life, he evidently means the same with choosing it, in the same sense in which the people of Israel were exhorted to choose life. (Deut. xxx. 19.) The doctor, speaking of that passage, observes, that life was set before them "for their choice," and then has the following words: "And if so, the obtaining it depended on their choice, or was connected therewith. And, doubtless, it is not less truly and properly set before sinners now, under the gospel dispensation, than it was before the Israelites in the time of Moses. From whence we may conclude, that if we really desire, and strive to enter into life, we shall not fall short of it." And in another passage, he represents this real desire of salvation as being the same with accepting of it, and coming to Christ for it, or at least as implying this. Having observed that "the Scriptures speak plainly and directly of sinners' neglecting the opportunity allowed them for obtaining life, as the real cause of their death or destruction," he proceeds to illustrate this by various passages of Scripture, such as, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation? Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life. O Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children, and ye would not!" etc., and then says, "These, with innumerable other passages of Scripture, most clearly and strongly express this sentiment, that the true and only reason why sinners perish is, that they neglect the great salvation offered to them, and will not come to Jesus Christ for life. But neither of these things can be truly and properly said of those persons who are awakened to such a sense of their sins as really to desire the salvation revealed, and to strive in order thereto." From these and other passages of the same import, I think it plainly appears that, by a real desire of salvation, he means a hearty choice of life, a true acceptance of salvation, and coming to Christ for life, or a taking and accepting of the good things freely offered

in the gospel. He has therefore set himself an easy task, while he undertakes to prove that they who thus desire salvation, and strive in the exercise of these desires, shall certainly obtain; for all the promises of the gospel are constantly made to such, without all question; and instead of fourteen arguments, which the doctor has produced to prove this, one might easily assign as many score, perhaps as strong and as much to the purpose. But that the unregenerate ever did or ever will thus desire, choose, and accept of this salvation, and come to Christ for it, is denied by those whom the doctor means to oppose; and what is more, is, in the strongest and most express terms, denied by our Savior himself. He says, "No man can come unto me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him. Every man therefore that hath heard, and learned of the Father, cometh unto me." (John vi. 44, 45.)

The doctor says, "that neither of these things," i. e., a neglect of the great salvation, a refusal to come to Christ for life, "can be truly and properly said of those persons who are awakened to such a sense of their sins as really to desire the salvation revealed, and to strive in order thereto, even though they are not (which is very supposable) already in a regenerate state." This is very supposable, we see; for the doctor has abundantly supposed it, through the whole course of his argument, and built all upon this supposition, as has been observed. But it is presumed he will not be able to prove, what has been with him so very supposable, as Jesus Christ, who doubtless well understood this matter, has not only supposed, but expressly asserted directly the contrary, in the words just quoted.

The doctor allows that unregenerate persons are not true believers or real Christians, and are without all real holiness. Consequently they do not love, choose, or desire holiness; but this is the object of their greatest and peculiar aversion. Therefore the salvation offered in the gospel, which is, in a peculiar sense, a holy salvation, and consists summarily in true holiness, they are so far from desiring, that nothing else is hated and rejected by them with such constancy, and so much with their whole heart, as this. And this is the only thing that keeps them from an interest in this salvation, as whoever is willing to take it as it is offered, has it; and it is certainly bestowed on every one who desires and chooses it, so asks for it; which is the same with coming to Christ for life.

Unregenerate sinners may, while they continue such, in some sense desire salvation. They may desire deliverance from natural evil, between which and salvation there is no medium; and they may desire safety and happiness, under a

conviction of conscience, that it is to be had in no other way but by sharing in the salvation which is by Jesus Christ. Such a desire as this every person under the gospel has in some degree, who has any belief of the truth of divine revelation; and these desires are strong, and influence the conduct of men in proportion to their attention to these things, and their apprehension and sense of the importance of them to themselves. But this is consistent with their hating the true character of the only Savior, and the salvation which he offers freely for their acceptance, and their continuing to reject it with their whole hearts. It is but to delude sinners, to represent to them that their concern and desires of this kind are the least evidence that their hearts are a whit the nearer a true submission to Christ, or a real acceptance of salvation as offered by him, or that there is the less opposition to the gospel in their hearts. If the doctor, by his *desires* of salvation, means such desires as these, which most men under the gospel have in a greater or less degree, and had explained himself, most of his arguments would appear in their true weakness to every one at first view. But these are not truly and properly desires of the salvation offered in the gospel according to the most common and natural meaning of the word; because that salvation is not properly the object of these desires, but something else; yea, salvation as it is offered is not desired, but rejected. If any particular gift or privilege is offered to a person, and nothing required as the condition of his having it but his hearty acceptance of it, he cannot be said to desire it according to the sense in which the word is generally used, if the gift offered is in itself undesirable to him, or if, all things considered, he is not willing to have it, and refuses to take it, however exercised he may be about the matter, and whatever pains he may take with relation to it.

The salvation revealed in the gospel is offered freely to the acceptance of all. The proclamation is, "Whosoever will, let him come and take it." And they who dislike and reject this salvation, and the Savior himself, by whom it is offered, and are, on the whole, all things considered, unwilling to be saved by him, cannot be properly said to desire this salvation; but it may truly be said that they do not desire to be saved by Christ. The words of Isaiah are very applicable to such, and of such he doubtless speaks, when he says, "When we shall see him (i. e., the Messiah) there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men." (Isa. liii. 2, 3.) Despising and rejecting any object is surely inconsistent with, and in direct opposition to, desiring it. Therefore there is not one instance in Scripture of any persons being spoken of as desiring salvation,

who were not heartily willing to accept it as it is offered, but such are represented as not desiring it. If, therefore, the doctor uses this word in a sense directly contrary to that in which it is used in Holy Scripture and in common speech, and so in a very strange and improper sense, it might reasonably have been expected that he would give notice of it, and so explain himself as to prevent mistake and delusion in this matter, in which mistakes are so easily and so often made, especially by the inattentive and unwary. But as it is evident from what has been taken notice of already, that he, at least sometimes, means something else by his desires of salvation, I proceed to observe, —

Men may most properly be said really and heartily to desire salvation, when the salvation itself is the object of their desires, the good things in which it consists being what they are pleased with, and choose for their own sake, and this implies a hearty approbation of the character of the Savior, and the way of salvation by him. They who have such a desire of salvation as this do truly choose life, and may properly be said to accept of salvation; to receive Jesus Christ and come to him for life, or believe on his name. The doctor seems to mean such kind of desires as these by the desires of salvation he speaks so much of, as has been shown. It is quoted, as has been before observed, that to such desires as these the promises of the gospel are made; therefore, they who thus desire salvation shall not fail of it. But such desires as these are holy desires, and therefore are found nowhere but in a regenerate heart. The love of holiness is itself an exercise of holiness; but a hearty desire of holiness, for its own sake, implies, and is indeed itself, an exercise of love to holiness. Now, to desire salvation for its own sake, because it is what it is, is to desire holiness for its own sake; for holiness comes into the very essence of this salvation. And that approbation of the character of the Savior, which is implied in true desires of salvation by him, also implies love to him, and consequently is an exercise of love to holiness; for holiness is an essential, and the most important part of the character of the Savior, without which he could not be the Savior of sinners.

The salvation which the gospel reveals, the way in which it is bestowed, and the Savior himself, are, if I may so speak, so clothed with holiness, and such a bright expression of it, which is the peculiar excellency and glory of the gospel, that the unholy are set at the greatest distance from these things, and men never will desire and choose them until they have a heart friendly to holiness, which is the new heart given in regeneration. If the unregenerate have a heart to desire and

choose the salvation offered in the gospel, in the sense now explained, it will be difficult to show what need they stand in of regeneration in order to be saved, or to tell what regeneration consists in. For if men have a heart to desire and choose holiness for holiness' sake, and so to delight in it as they must in order to desire and choose the salvation offered in the gospel, and come to Christ, they have no need of a new heart in order to be holy and happy in God and the Savior; this same principle from whence such desires flow being perfected, they will be perfectly united to the Savior, and completely delivered from sin and misery, and in full possession of salvation. The need men stand in, therefore, of being regenerated, or of having a new heart given them, is a demonstration that the unregenerate have no such desires.

And this is agreeable to the whole current of Scripture representation, as might be easily shown was there need of it. The Scripture ranks all mankind in two classes — those that love God and his ways, who know and choose the things that are excellent; and those, the language of whose hearts to God is, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways;" who are enemies to the just God and Savior, and neglect and refuse the salvation offered. Of these, some may be more concerned about themselves than others, and so have more exercises, and take more pains to escape eternal misery; but still their hearts are as opposite to reconciliation with God and to the salvation offered as ever; they have still a heart of stone, a stubborn, rebellious heart, and are dead in trespasses and sins, until they have a new heart given them, and they are quickened by regeneration.

If the doctor will show from Scripture that there are some persons who are neither dead in trespasses and sins, nor alive to God; who are neither enemies to God and the Savior, nor his friends, and reconciled to him; or if he will tell what need they stand in of regeneration who have these hearty desires of salvation, which are inconsistent with a hard heart, a neglecting the great salvation offered them, and a refusing to come to Christ for life, and will plainly show what such a regeneration consists in, he will doubtless greatly oblige the Christian world. But till this is done, we must take leave to conclude that the desires of the unregenerate he speaks of, and the regeneration of those who first have these desires, are a figment of his own.

SECTION IV.

An Examination of nine of the Doctor's fourteen Arguments.

What the doctor undertakes to support is, that the endeavors and striving of the unregenerate have a promise of success, and so are certainly connected with salvation. This he attempts to prove by fourteen arguments. It appears at first view they are not wanting in number; the weight and strength of them is now to be inquired into. At least nine of these fourteen have all their strength in the words *desire of salvation*, or words to the like purpose; in which the unregenerate sinner is supposed to have such a desire of salvation which implies a real choice of it as it is offered, and a hearty acceptance of it, and coming to Christ for it. Now, as this supposition is entirely groundless and contrary to the truth, as has been shown in the last section, all those arguments which are built wholly upon it are demolished, and fall of course. But that this may clearly appear, we will briefly consider each of them.

Arg. 1. "Mankind, being considered in Scripture as in a state of sin and death, it is declared that Jesus Christ came into the world to save them, to save sinners, to seek and to save that which was lost." The doctor proceeds to illustrate this by several passages of Scripture, and then adds, "Now, from such declarations of Holy Scripture we may fairly infer that all those to whom the gospel is preached have therein an offer of salvation made to them. And if it really makes an offer, or points out a method of salvation to all, can it be supposed that any sinner, who is willing and desirous, and strives to obtain the salvation thus revealed, should yet be rejected of God and finally perish? Certainly it cannot." The whole of this is granted. But what does it prove? that salvation is offered to the acceptance of all, and therefore whoever is so "desirous" to obtain the salvation thus revealed as to "be willing" to have it, and heartily accept of it, shall not be rejected. Nothing can be more certain than this. But what is this to an unregenerate sinner, who will not come to Christ for life, and continues to make light of it, and reject the salvation offered to him?

Arg. 2. "God hath declared, in the most solemn manner, that he hath no pleasure in the death of sinners. (Ezek. xxxiii. 11.) Yea, it is declared that God will have all men to be saved. Now, if what these declarations most obviously and strongly import be true, surely all who *really desire* and strive to obtain eternal life will certainly obtain it. For, if God himself hath no

pleasure in their death, but the contrary, and if they themselves desire life, and endeavor to obtain it, what should hinder their salvation? Can the devil be supposed to hinder it on these suppositions? He cannot, unless he is stronger, not only than man, but than God himself." Very strongly expressed, and very true; but what is all this to the case in hand? to the unregenerate, who are so far from desiring life, that they choose and love death rather than life, (Pr. viii. 36,) and are the children of disobedience, in whom the devil powerfully worketh, (Eph. ii. 2,) yea, the children of the devil, whose lusts they will do, (John viii. 44; 1 John iii. 10,) being voluntarily in his kingdom and under his power?

Arg. 3. "According to the representation of Scripture, God affords to sinners a space for repentance, a day of grace and salvation, or a season for making their peace with him, during which time he is said to be near, so that he may be found by them that seek him. Yea, God is represented as long-suffering towards them, being unwilling that they should perish." Having mentioned a number of texts to this purpose, he says, "Now, is it consistent with these repeated declarations to suppose that sinners, during the time of their visitation, may *really desire* and strive to enter in at the strait gate, and yet fall short of salvation?" All true yet, if really desiring and striving imply a hearty acceptance of offered mercy; but nothing to the purpose. The unregenerate sinner, whose heart is as hard as a stone, who refuses to repent and embrace the gospel, is left out of the question, and may perish, notwithstanding all these declarations. The following words, upon this argument, are, perhaps, worthy a transcription: "If God is long-suffering, not willing that any of those sinners, to whom the gospel is preached, should perish, but that all should come to repentance, certainly he puts them all into a capacity for attaining salvation." If he means they may be saved if they will, or that nothing can prevent their salvation but the want of their good will in the case, as it is presumed he does, his argument is acknowledged to be just. But he goes on to say, "To suppose that any are left in such a state that they cannot avoid perishing, though they desire it, or in such a state as renders repentance impossible for them, manifestly supposes that God wills them to perish, that he would not have them come to repentance, nor really allows them a space for it in any proper sense; and so is directly contrary to the doctrine of Scripture." All may be saved who truly desire it, and repentance is impossible to none who are willing to repent. But if the unregenerate do always refuse to repent, there being no difficulty in the way of their repentance and

salvation but the obstinacy of their own will, what is all this to the doctor's purpose? In this passage, the doctor fully shows that by desiring salvation he intends the sinner's good will in the case, and supposes that the unregenerate may be so well disposed towards repentance and salvation as that, if they perish, it must be owing not to any deficiency in their hearts, but to some fatal difficulty which God has laid in their way, which it is impossible their good will should remove. He adds, "But let the unbiased judge." And so say I; let them judge whether the doctor had any reason to make such a representation as this, or whether it is any thing to the purpose.

Arg. 4. "It is further to be remarked, that during this space given for repentance, or that day of salvation which the Scriptures so plainly assert, sinners are earnestly admonished, exhorted, and commanded to seek God, to be reconciled to him, and to work out their salvation." And having produced a number of passages to this purpose, he draws the consequence in the following words: "These exhortations and commands are directed more especially to sinners, to the wicked, to simple ones, scorners, and fools; to such as were not yet reconciled to God. And can any unprejudiced man think it consistent with them to suppose that sinners may be awakened to such a sense of their misery in being in a state of alienation from God, as to desire to be reconciled to him, and really strive to obtain a part in the salvation thus revealed, and yet fail of it? Judge for yourselves." We will; and, therefore, conclude that these exhortations and commands, being given to the wicked, scorners, and fools, who are the same with the unregenerate, is no argument that they require nothing but what such may comply with, and yet remain wicked, scorners, and fools; but they are required to leave off scorning, to forsake the foolish. That they who do this, and so truly desire to be reconciled to God, i. e., are in any degree reconciled to God at heart, shall not fail of salvation. But simple ones, scorners, and fools, or the unregenerate, never do this, while they remain such. And now, what is become of the doctor's arguments? Let the reader judge for himself.

Arg. 5. "Conformably hereto, life and death, blessing and cursing, are said to be set before sinners in the Word of God, and they are admonished to choose life. (Deut. xxx. 19.) But with what truth or propriety could life and death be said to be set before sinners, if, though they desired life, and heartily endeavored to obtain it, they might yet fail thereof?" Life is undoubtedly set before sinners for their choice. If, therefore, they comply with the offer and exhortation, and choose life,

they will certainly have it. But what is this to the sinner who does not choose, but obstinately refuses, the life offered to him? This is true of every unregenerate person, as has been shown.

Arg. 6. "The Scripture speaks of some sinners as wholly left and forsaken of God in this world, given up to their own hearts' lusts, to incurable blindness, to strong delusion, etc., that they might be damned. Now, if there is any such thing as such like passages of Scripture seem to assert, and as they are usually understood, it will even from hence follow, that the persons thus given up of God were, antecedently hereto, in a salvable state; that they had, in some measure, the restraints and strivings of God's Spirit; that they were really put into a capacity for obtaining salvation, *had they desired it;* and that their not doing so was the reason of their being thus forsaken."

It is sufficient to observe upon all this, that there is no advance made by this argument, it being the same with the foregoing, only in a little different words. All that the doctor attempts to prove here is, that if the sinner under the gospel is not saved, but is given up to ruin, it is because he does not desire and choose salvation when offered to him, but neglects and refuses it. But how does this help the unregenerate, who always do this?

Arg. 7. "The Scriptures speak plainly and directly of sinners' neglecting the opportunity allowed them for obtaining life, as the real cause of their death or destruction." Hence he infers, in allusion to the Scriptures he here quotes, "that the true and only reason why sinners perish is, that they do not regard the hand of God stretched out to save them; that they grieve him by their obduracy in sin; that they neglect the great salvation offered to them, and will not come to Jesus Christ for life. But neither of these things can be truly and properly said of those persons who are awakened to such a sense of their sins as really to desire the salvation revealed, and to strive in order thereto, even though they are not (which is very supposable) already in a regenerate state. And, therefore, all such persons, unless they cease to desire and strive thus, shall be saved." It is well he has thought of his perseverance to the end of life once — which he had hitherto in every argument entirely forgot, or, rather, implicitly denied — as necessary in order to be interested in the promises. But he goes on: "Not, to be sure, without being born of God; but they shall be renewed in the spirit of their minds, and, consequently, enter into life." What has been said upon this passage, in the last section, is sufficient to convince any

attentive, impartial person, I trust, that what the doctor here takes to be "very supposable," is plainly contrary to Scripture and all reason; and, therefore, the argument being built upon a most evidently false hypothesis, as are all the other, is much too weak to bear its own weight.

I shall at present pass over the next five arguments, leaving them to be more particularly considered by and by; and now attend to the two last, as they seem to be exactly of the same stamp with those already mentioned, and, therefore, most properly put with them.

ARG. 13. "It is very generally allowed, that all those in general, who hear the gospel, are invited and required, not only to believe it, but to repent of their sins, and to become the true disciples of Jesus Christ. It is, moreover, universally acknowledged, that the gospel promises eternal life to all who do thus, or to all real Christians; and it is represented as a wonderful manifestation of the goodness of God to men, that he should, in this way, promise salvation to them. Now, if these conceptions and representations are just, as they unquestionably are, it may from hence be clearly inferred, that there is grace accompanying the dispensation of the gospel, sufficient to render it effectual to the salvation of those who hear it, *provided they are really desirous of*, and endeavor after it." All very true. But what if they are not really desirous of it, but oppose and reject it? And if this is true of all the unregenerate, the argument comes to nothing.

ARG. 14. "It is very generally allowed, that those who, having had the gospel preached unto them, do not actually comply with the method of salvation revealed therein, and so finally obtain eternal life, will have an aggravated condemnation at the last day. This is agreeable to the representations of Scripture in many places. But what reason, what justice, would there be in this, if these sinful and unhappy men were never really put into a capacity for obtaining this salvation; or never had it made possible to them, though they desired and endeavored to become partakers of it?"

I answer, no reason or justice at all. But what is this to his purpose? All sinners under the gospel are "really put into a capacity for obtaining salvation," and that whether they desire and accept of this salvation or not; it being freely offered to their choice and acceptance. In this sense it is made possible to all; and their constantly neglecting and refusing to desire and endeavor to become partakers of it does not alter the case with respect to this. If, therefore, they miss of this salvation, because they do not desire it, but neglect and refuse it, which is true of all unregenerate men, then this is

very consistent with their falling under "an aggravated condemnation," because they "do not actually comply with the method of salvation revealed."

Nine of the doctor's fourteen arguments have now been considered; and as they are all built upon one hypothesis, which has no truth in it, the falsehood of that being detected, they appear to be perfectly weak and inconclusive.

Indeed, these nine arguments are really but one. As they are all built on one hypothesis, so the predicate in each is much one and the same, as the attentive reader may easily see by looking over them. The number, therefore, adds nothing to the weight. They may be easily reduced to one; and that to nothing. Or, if he had pleased, he might have added a hundred, yea, as many as there are promises in the Bible, as weighty and as much to the purpose as any of these.

"But let the unbiased judge."

SECTION V.

In which three of the remaining five of the Doctor's Arguments are examined.

The doctor's eighth, tenth, and eleventh arguments are so nearly one, or at least run so much into one and the same thing, that they may be considered together. These are stated in the following words: "Sinners have a promise of the spirit of wisdom, or of spiritual wisdom, with which eternal life is connected, if they hearken to God's reproof and diligently seek it. Turn you at my reproof; behold I will pour out my spirit unto you; I will make known my words unto you. (Pr. i. 23.) Hear instruction and be wise, and refuse it not. Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, and waiting at the posts of my doors." (Pr. viii. 33, 34.) And "our Savior pronounces a blessing on those that hunger and thirst after righteousness; adding, that they shall be filled." And "to this promise of our Lord another may be subjoined, which is also found in his Sermon on the Mount: Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find," etc.

The doctor attempts to prove that the condition to which these promises of spiritual, saving blessings are made, intends the exercises and doings of the unregenerate. His arguments for this are now carefully to be inquired into.

He having observed, that "it will perhaps be said, that none but a regenerate man can be supposed to turn at God's, or wisdom's reproof, or to wait at the posts of her doors, in the

sense here intended," goes on to say, "But this were an arbitrary assertion; one for which there is not the least color or foundation. For the persons here addressed are spoken to under the character of simple ones, scorners, and fools, who certainly need wisdom the most of any; and the promise is apparently made for the encouragement of such to turn at her reproof, and to watch daily at her gates, that they might find her, and thereby find life. This was, therefore, to be done by them antecedently to their obtaining spiritual wisdom, not in the actual exercise of it."

The persons here addressed are indeed "simple ones, scorners, and fools, who certainly need wisdom the most of any." But does it hence follow, that they are not called upon and required to obey and be wise; but to do something while they remain scorners and fools, or antecedent to their obtaining wisdom? I think not; but directly the contrary, viz., that they are required to embrace wisdom, or be wise; to cease from scorning, and become obedient; to forsake the foolish, and live. I trust the doctor will not deny that turning at wisdom's reproof implies thus much; and if so, it cannot mean any thing to be done by them while they continue fools and scorners, or consistent with their continuing such. It appears to me an odd way of arguing, to say, that seeing they are addressed in the character of simple ones, scorners, and fools, therefore they are called upon to act according to this character; that is, like simple ones, scorners, and fools. But thus argues the doctor.

And this is not the only instance of the doctor's arguing at this rate. In order to prove that the asking, seeking, and knocking our Savior speaks of intends the desires, prayers, and endeavors of the unregenerate, he says, "The words were spoken by him to the promiscuous multitude of his professed followers, and there is no reason to suppose that all these were in a regenerate state." This is as if a doctor of divinity should gravely undertake to prove that the moral law, contained in the ten commands, requires nothing but what unholy, wicked men do, while such; because it was published to a promiscuous multitude, many, if not most of whom were such. The doctor allows, that "all those in general who hear the gospel are invited and required to repent of their sins, and to become the true disciples of Jesus Christ." He represents those who will not allow this, to be "men of a disordered mind, hardly fit to be reasoned with." If the doctor will not rank himself among these, he must allow that our Savior, when he preached the gospel on the mount, did invite and require all his hearers to repent and become his true disciples,

and as such, with a penitent, humble, Christian temper of mind, to ask, seek, and knock, however far he knew most of them then to be from such a temper. But this is to give up the argument under consideration, as fit to be used only by "men of a disordered mind, hardly fit to be reasoned with." But to return.

The doctor goes on to argue, that if the promise of wisdom in the texts quoted is not "made to the turning, waiting, and watching of an unregenerate man," then it amounts to no more than this, that, upon their first becoming wise, they shall then have wisdom given them. But such a promise he thinks not "agreeable to the wisdom of God."

This, with his words just now quoted relating to these Scriptures, leads to the following remarks: —

1. It does not appear that there is any promise of wisdom in these texts, of which they have no degree, who hearken and turn at wisdom's reproof. The thing required here is wisdom. They are exhorted to act directly contrary to what scorners and fools do, which surely is to act wisely. "Hear instruction and be wise, and refuse it not. Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates," etc. Hearing instruction is here spoken of as the same with being wise, or as that in which wisdom consists; and not as something which a fool must do, as such, or while he continues a fool, and antecedent to his exercising any wisdom, therefore such are pronounced blessed who hearken to wisdom, watching daily at her gates, etc., which is itself an exercise of wisdom. We have the same exhortation in a little different words, in the context: "O ye simple, understand wisdom; and, ye fools, be ye of an understanding heart." (Pr. viii. 5.) None can suppose that what is required here is something to be done by the simple and fools, "antecedently to their obtaining wisdom;" but they are called upon to be wise.

The same is evident with respect to the other passage referred to by the doctor. "How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof." Here it is supposed that they must cease from loving simplicity, and no longer delight in scorning, and hate knowledge, in order to turn at wisdom's reproof; or, rather, that this is implied in the turning required. Therefore, turning is an exercise of wisdom and obedience, in opposition to folly and stubbornness. How the doctor could imagine that here, and in the words before considered, wisdom is promised by doing something in which no wisdom is implied, I am at a loss.

It is, indeed, here promised that, upon their turning, wis-

dom will make known her words unto them. But this only intends that they shall be taken into the school of wisdom, in consequence of their being so wise as to embrace her, and shall be trained up by her, as the children of wisdom, to greater degrees of knowledge and understanding. For "the Lord layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous." (Pr. ii. 7.) "To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have more abundance. Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser; teach a just man, and he will increase in learning." (Pr. ix. 9.)

This leads to another remark.

2. It is contrary to reason and common sense, yea, a plain contradiction, to suppose that any person does hearken to the reproofs and instruction of wisdom, and obey her dictates, while a fool, and antecedent to his having and exercising any wisdom. To hearken to wisdom and turn at her reproof, is surely itself wise, or an instance and exercise of wisdom. If the dictates of wisdom itself are wise, then it is not folly, but wisdom, to hearken to them. If this is not wisdom, it will be difficult to show what is wisdom, or that there is any such thing in the universe.

The doctor concludes this argument by saying, "I may venture to appeal to any wise man whether such a promise would be agreeable to the wisdom of God." I will venture my character for wisdom with the public, and with the doctor himself, so far as to say, that whatever promise is made to hearkening to wisdom and turning at her reproof, is a promise made to a wise act, or the exercise of wisdom, and that such a promise may be agreeable to the wisdom of God. And I hope the doctor will, for time to come, be so wise, and so much of a divine and philosopher, as not to assert, or even think, the contrary.

I come now to consider the doctor's arguments to prove that hungering and thirsting after righteousness intends the exercises of the unregenerate. He says, "There is not the least ground to doubt but that convinced, awakened sinners may and do often thus hunger and thirst after righteousness."

I answer, hungering and thirsting supposes and implies, yea, consists in a relish of, and appetite to, the things hungered and thirsted after. So far, therefore, as sinners are without any real, true appetite to holiness or righteousness, and have no relish and love for it, but an aversion to it, just so far there is ground to doubt whether they hunger and thirst after it; yea, there is ground of assurance that they do not. But the unregenerate have no such appetite; for their unregeneracy consists in the want of it, and the perfect prevalence and

dominion of an inclination and appetite directly contrary hereto. Therefore, whatever else they may hunger and thirst after, they do not hunger and thirst after righteousness.

Besides, if these words of our Savior are considered in their connection, it will appear unreasonable to apply them to the unregenerate. Hungering and thirsting after righteousness is spoken of as an abiding, constant exercise, and points out a character as much as any of the rest of these beatitudes — such as the poor in spirit, the merciful, the pure in heart, etc. The doctor, I conclude, will not suppose that the other exercises or characters mentioned here intend the transient acts of the unregenerate, but the abiding exercises and character of true Christians, which are peculiar and essential to them as such. And there is no reason why this one expression should be singled out as belonging to the unregenerate only, and not to those whose temper and exercises Christ is characterizing through this whole passage.

But against this the doctor argues in the following words: "If any should say that the regenerate only, or such as have already attained unto righteousness, can be supposed to hunger and thirst after righteousness, this were altogether as contrary to reason and good sense as to say that a man must eat a good meal in order to be hungry, in a literal sense; and that he must drink a hearty draught, in order to be athirst."

The misrepresentation and absurdity contained in these words must appear, I think, to all who will calmly attend to the matter. Regeneration does not consist in any exercise of the mind, or any enjoyment; but by being regenerated a foundation is laid in the mind for holy exercises, for hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and eating and drinking in a spiritual sense. In regeneration is given what may be called an appetite to holiness, or a right taste and disposition. And the exercises of this new taste or appetite, in which the mind hungers and thirsts, eats and drinks, and enjoys spiritual objects, follow regeneration and are the effect of it. The regenerate, therefore, have not "attained unto righteousness," or active holiness, neither have they ate and drank so as to be satisfied until the appetite given in regeneration is exercised in hungering and thirsting after holiness; which appetite, thus exercised, is always gratified in the enjoyment of the object towards which it is exercised. And thus the promise of Christ is always fulfilled; for men never are filled or satisfied, but in the exercise of holiness; that is, in loving and delighting in divine things, or in hungering and thirsting after righteousness. But in this way, they never fail of being satisfied or filled. The doctor, therefore, wholly misrepresents

the matter. If he had put the case properly, and according to truth, it would stand thus: "If any should say that the regenerate only can be supposed to hunger and thirst after righteousness, this were altogether as contrary to reason and good sense as to say, that a man must" have a stomach prepared, or an appetite to relish food and drink, in order to his hungering after or desiring them. But that this is perfectly agreeable to reason and good sense, I trust will not be disputed by any one who has the least degree of either. And it may be therefore added, that to suppose that the unregenerate do ever hunger and thirst after righteousness, as the hungry man desires food, or the thirsty drink, is altogether as contrary to all reason and good sense as to say that a man wholly destitute of any appetite to food and drink, or with a perfect antipathy against them, is hungry and thirsty in a literal sense, and earnestly longs for them.

The doctor goes on to say, "This benediction and promise more especially respect unregenerate, heavy-laden sinners, as do also such gracious invitations and promises as these: Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters. Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good. (Isa. lv. 1, 2.) Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst. (John iv. 14.) I am the bread of life; he that cometh unto me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. (John vi. 35.) If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. This he spake of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive. (John vii. 37–39.) Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." (Rev. xxii. 17.)

Concerning these passages of Scripture it may be observed, 1. That if the invitations and promises contained in them are made to unregenerate sinners, and wholly respect their exercises and doings while such, then the unregenerate, while such, come to the waters of life, and do actually drink of this water: yea, they come to Christ and believe on him; for the invitation is to this, and to this only the promise is made. Of this any one may be certain by carefully reading the quoted passages over. It seems the doctor supposes the unregenerate do all this, by his thus quoting these words, as otherwise they are not to his purpose. When he shall prove this, we will acknowledge he has gained his point, but till then we must be confident that none come to Christ, unless they are drawn by the regenerating influences of God's Spirit, and that they who believe on him are born of God, and that men's unwillingness, or opposition of heart to coming to Christ, to coming and taking the water of life, is the only ground of the necessity of

their being born again, in order to see the kingdom of God. If, therefore, these passages are parallel to that under consideration, which I am ready to allow, then hungering and thirsting after righteousness is the same with coming to Christ and believing on him; therefore, is peculiar to the regenerate. This leads me to observe, —

2. That the hungering and thirsting mentioned in these passages does not intend, at least in all of them, a hungering and thirsting after righteousness, but something else. When Christ says, "He that cometh unto me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst," he does not mean a hungering and thirsting after righteousness. He makes no promise here to this hungering and thirsting, which he does to hungering and thirsting after righteousness; but the promise is made to coming to him and believing on him; and he expressly distinguishes the hungering and thirsting he here speaks of from believing, etc., and represents it as inconsistent with it. He that believeth on him shall not hunger and thirst: the one is not, cannot be, where the other is. Moreover, our Savior here asserts that they who come to him, etc., shall never have any more of that hunger and thirst he here speaks of. But will any Christian believe that no real saint ever hungers and thirsts after righteousness? Have they not a relish and thirst for the waters of life? Surely they have strong desires after, and their souls thirst for God, even the living God; and as new-born babes, they desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby. By hungering and thirsting, then, Christ here means a being in a miserable, destitute state, or unsatisfied desires, uneasiness and want, without any thing to afford relief; which is sometimes, if not often, meant by hungering and thirsting in Scripture. He here promises that they who come to him and drink the water of life shall never hunger and thirst again in this sense, shall no more be in that destitute, miserable state in which they were before; which may well be represented by a person famishing with hunger and thirst, without any thing to relieve and satisfy him.

Let us now hear the doctor's argument from these words. "How unreasonable, how unscriptural," says he, "were it to suppose that, by those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, our Lord intends only the regenerate, or such as have already eaten and drank of that spiritual bread and water which he giveth, especially when he declareth above that such persons shall neither hunger nor thirst again!"

As all the strength of the argument in these words lies in the supposition, that when our Lord says, he that cometh to him shall neither hunger nor thirst again, he means hungering

and thirsting after righteousness, what has been just observed serves to show how groundless and absurd it is. If the doctor's argument is good, it proves that, by those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, our Lord intends only the unregenerate; and that the regenerate never do thus hunger and thirst, so have no true desires after God and holiness; yea, it proves, according to the doctor's sense of the words, that the regenerate do not desire salvation. By hungering and thirsting after righteousness, is meant "strong and ardent desires to attain the righteousness, and so the salvation revealed in the gospel," as the doctor explains it. Therefore, according to him, the regenerate never hunger nor thirst after righteousness, nor earnestly desire salvation, this being peculiar to the unregenerate. According to this, neither David, nor Paul, nor any of the worthies we have on sacred record were regenerate, for they hungered and thirsted after righteousness; they had strong and ardent desires after righteousness and salvation.

If these things are duly considered, it will, I believe, appear that this argument of the doctor's takes all its seeming strength only from a jingle of words, by jumbling several texts together, which have not the same meaning, and which, if they were taken in the doctor's sense of them, would be inconsistent with each other, with the rest of the Bible, with common sense, and even with the doctor himself.

And now the reader is to judge whether, in this view of the case, the doctor had any real ground for the following words: "Can any man read this, and yet suppose that hungering and thirsting after righteousness, in the sense of our Savior, is always subsequent, never prior, to coming to him, or to regeneration? If he can, however good his heart may be, no one has much reason to envy him his head."

Why does the doctor express himself so guardedly? "Always subsequent, *never* prior, to regeneration." If his argument above is good, and the Scriptures referred to any thing to the purpose, it follows, as has been shown, that hungering and thirsting after righteousness, or a desire of salvation, is never subsequent, but always prior, to regeneration, and if this is not true, the argument comes to nothing. If any man may think hungering and thirsting is ever consequent, and not always prior, to regeneration, he may, as consistently with all the doctor has said, think this is always subsequent, never prior, to regeneration; but if the doctor had truly and fully expressed the genuine consequence of his premises, he would have quite spoiled his argument, and it would have appeared at first view that he had proved too much for himself or any body else.

It appears, by the last sentence quoted, that I have sufficiently endangered my head to the doctor. However good the doctor's may be in the main, most readers, I imagine, will take leave to think it was not perfectly right in this instance, at least; and I will presume to say in my turn, Can any man read this, and yet think the doctor's arguments strong and consistent? If he can, no one, I am sure, has any reason to envy him his head.

The doctor's argument, to prove that when our Savior promises good things to them that ask for them he means the asking of the unregenerate, shall be next considered. He having observed that "the good things promised are such as are comprehended in the gift of the Spirit," goes on to say, "The promise of which, in consequence of asking, seeking, and knocking, is so far from supposing that the persons who do so are already regenerate, or that the Spirit is given them prior to their asking, that it rather implies the direct contrary, viz., that they had not the Spirit in the sense here intended; for if they are supposed, at the time of their asking, to have the Spirit of God dwelling in them, to abide with them forever, as all the sons of God by regeneration have, what becomes of the promise? What are they to have in consequence of asking? Is it only the continuance of the Spirit, or larger measures of it? But these are, I think, never called *giving the Spirit*, in the language of Scripture, which means the original bestowment of it (or him) on such as were destitute of it, in consequence of which they are said to be born of the Spirit, or of God." As a man is but once born of God, or of the Spirit, so the Spirit is, properly speaking, "never given more than once; for being once given, he is to be in, and abide with, believers forever."

If the following things are attended to, it will be easily seen how little weight there is in this argument.

1. The regeneration is produced by the Spirit of God; yet in effecting this change he is not given, properly speaking, to abide in them forever, as a promised, abiding principle of holiness; but the Holy Spirit is thus given, after regeneration, in consequence of faith in Jesus Christ, to which the gift of the Spirit is often and always promised. The Spirit of God, in regenerating men, operates not as a promised gift or agent; but regeneration is effected as an unpromised favor. There are no promises to any particular persons of the gift of the Spirit, in this sense, to produce this change in them, in which they are wholly passive, nor are there any promises in the Bible to regeneration itself or to the regenerate, antecedent to any exercise of holiness, but only to those exercises which

are the fruit and consequence of regeneration. This remark is sufficient to show the doctor's mistake, in supposing that the Spirit of God is given in regeneration as the Spirit of promise, to abide with them forever; on which mistake the whole force of his argument rests. But this will be more fully confirmed by what follows.

2. Though the Spirit of God is in a sense given in regeneration, as it is an effect produced by the Spirit, yet he is not herein given as he is to the believer, as a promised, abiding principle of holiness. In this latter sense, in which sense alone he is promised, he is given to those who believe, or those who ask him, which are really one and the same thing, as will be more fully considered by and by. Christ promises the Spirit to those who come to him or believe on him. "Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. This spoke he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive." (John vii. 37–39.) Now I trust the doctor will not deny that men must be regenerated, or born of God, antecedent to their believing on Christ, or in order to this; if he should, the apostle John will confute him, for he says, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." (1 John v. 1.) If they who believe on Christ are already born of God, then, when Christ promises the Spirit to them who believe on him, he means something by the gift of the Spirit which is not given in regeneration, and something more, even that he should be in them forever as an abiding principle of spiritual life or holiness. Exactly parallel to this are the words spoken by the same person, long before: "Turn you at my reproof; behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you." (Pr. i. 23.) To turn at wisdom's reproof is the same with coming to Christ, or believing on him; and in consequence of this, the Spirit is promised to be poured out upon them, as our Savior promises the Spirit to those who come to him, by the same metaphor — water. We may not hence infer that persons are to turn to Christ without the Spirit, or antecedent to regeneration; but that, being regenerated by the unpromised influence of the divine Spirit, they turn at wisdom's reproof, come to Christ, and believe on him, and so ask him for all good things; to which the Spirit is promised, to be in them forever. We hence see how greatly mistaken the doctor was in supposing, in the passage above quoted, that when the Scripture speaks of giving the Spirit, it always means "the original bestowment of him, in consequence of which men are said to be born of the Spirit of God." For our Savior speaks

of giving the Spirit to them who believe on him; but believing on him is in consequence of the original bestowment of the Spirit in regeneration; for such, St. John says, are already born of God. Therefore, after men have received the Spirit, so far as is necessary in order to their being born of God, they must believe on Christ, or come to him, and ask him, in order to receive the Spirit in the sense in which he is promised by Christ.

Exactly agreeable to this are the words of St. Paul. "That we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." (Gal. iii. 14.) "In whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise." (Eph. i. 13.) Here he speaks of the gift of the Spirit as promised to men, in which he doubtless has reference to the promise of Christ now under consideration, among others; and this, he says, they received through faith, and after they had believed; therefore, after they were regenerate. Faith, then, is the condition of this promise, and not any doings of the unregenerate. Again he says, "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts." (Gal. iv. 6.) He here speaks of the gift or bestowment of the Spirit in consequence of their being the sons of God, and he had just told how they became the sons or children of God, viz., that they were "all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." (Gal. iii. 26.) And it is worthy of remark here, that the promise which Christ makes of the Spirit to his disciples, to abide with them forever, to which the doctor alludes, is made to those who were already regenerate; and he expressly says, the world, that is, the unregenerate, cannot receive the Spirit in the sense in which he is here promised. (See John xiv. 16, 17.) He, therefore, does not mean what the doctor calls "the original bestowment" of the Spirit. If the doctor had well attended to all this, the paragraph of his, now under consideration, would most probably never have seen the light.

3. Though the Spirit operates in a sense and degree in regeneration, yet, as he does not regenerate men as being given as an abiding principle of life, but this change is produced as an unpromised favor, which neither unites them to Christ nor gives them an interest to any promise in the Bible, there appears great propriety in promising the Spirit as an abiding principle of eternal life, which comprehends all good things to those exercises or acts by which the regenerate actively unite themselves to Christ, and come to him, trust in him, and ask in his name for this great benefit; and our being directed to believe on Christ in order to this, and ask for the Spirit in this sense, with a promise that he shall be given, is no argument

that, in order to thus believing and asking, we must not first be born of God; therefore, the doctor's argument is wholly without foundation. The doctor himself allows that persons must have the influences of the Spirit of God in order to strive, or ask for the Spirit, so as to be entitled to the promise. Therefore, they have the Spirit in some sense when they ask, and in order to their asking; and, therefore, according to him, the promise of the Spirit to them who ask does not imply that persons must not have the Spirit in order to ask. If, therefore, there is any reason in what he says, which indeed there is not, it is as much against himself as any body else.

4. It is acknowledged that the Spirit is given but once, as he is promised by our Savior. He is given to believers never to be taken away; but this gift of the Spirit men never receive in regeneration, as has been shown, but in consequence of that faith, that coming to Christ, and asking him, for which regeneration lays the only foundation; and as this gift is promised to believing and asking, so it can be received in no other way, and never is given but in consequence of asking.

5. As this gift is first received in a way of believing and asking, so it is continued, and the Spirit abides in believers by the exercise of faith, or their continuing to ask for the Spirit in a persevering way; therefore, men are not only to ask for the Spirit in order to their first receiving this gift, but are to continue to ask, in order to the Spirit's abiding in them, and perfecting the work he has begun. This direction and promise of our Savior is, therefore, applicable to true Christians at all times.

The doctor does not expressly deny this; but the whole of what he says is inconsistent with it. If believers having the Spirit dwelling in them, with a promise that he shall abide with them forever, renders it absurd for them any more to ask for this favor, which comprises all good things, then certainly they must ask no more, where once they are born of God, and have received the Spirit; and if true Christians are never to ask for the Spirit, because he is in them, and they have the promise that he shall abide with them forever, then they are never more to ask for any good thing, as all these are comprised in the gift of the Spirit. Does the doctor mean to represent prayer as inconsistent and absurd in the true Christian, who is born of the Spirit of God? It certainly is so, if there is any reason or propriety in what he says.

If, as the doctor justly observes, all spiritual blessings and good things are comprehended in the gift of the Spirit, and, therefore, asking for the Spirit is the same with asking for spiritual blessings, or good things in general, — and if, when the

Spirit is once given, as he is to all the regenerate, there is no reason or propriety in asking for the Spirit, upon which position the doctor's argument is wholly grounded, — then they who are regenerate have no spiritual good thing to ask for; consequently, prayer is no part of their duty. This belongs only to the unregenerate. How contrary to this is the Scripture account of the matter! This teaches true Christians to pray without ceasing; to pray always with all prayer; and this, although they already have the Spirit, and pray by the Spirit. There we find such words as these: "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered." (Rom. viii. 26.) "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit." (Eph. vi. 18.) "Praying in the Holy Ghost." (Jude 20.)

6. On the whole, it appears that turning at wisdom's reproof, coming to Christ, or believing on him, a willingness to take of the water of life, and asking good things of God, are all one and the same thing, or at least imply each other; and, therefore, the promise of the Spirit, which is the sum of all good, is made to this. But in order to men's coming up to this condition of the promise, they must, according to Scripture, first be born of the Spirit of God. In order really and heartily to ask for good things, there must be a real and hearty willingness to have them, or a desire of them considered as what they are; and, indeed, asking is nothing but a proper exercise and expression of such willingness and desire. But this is the same with coming to Christ, receiving him, or believing on him; in order to which men must be regenerated, as has been before shown. They who, with their whole hearts, reject all the good things the gospel offers, surely do not in any true sense ask for them. But this is true of all unregenerate men.

SECTION VI.

The Doctor's ninth and twelfth Arguments examined.

We now come to the ninth argument which the doctor has produced in favor of his hypothesis. This is in the following words: "In Ezekiel (chap. 36) God declares his purpose to do many things for the people of Israel, and, among the rest, to give them a new heart, and a new spirit. But he adds afterwards, I will be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them; which, unquestionably, relates in part to the new heart and new spirit spoken of before. Upon which we

may briefly remark, that eternal life, or salvation, is connected, in Scripture, with the having a new heart; that such a heart is the gift of God; that he gives such a heart, not prior to, but in consequence of, being inquired of, or sought to, for it; and, consequently, that the inquiring of God here intended is the act, not of the regenerate, but the unregenerate, who are awakened to desire and seek after it."

If this passage of Scripture is duly attended to, it will appear, I doubt not, that it affords no foundation for what the doctor attempts to argue from it.

There are two things promised by God, in this chapter, which he would do in behalf of the people of Israel, now under his correction for their sins, both of which depended, not on them, but on God's sovereign determination to do it, not for their sakes, but for his own holy name's sake. This is repeatedly declared in this very passage. (Ezek. xxxvi. 22, 23.) God is through this whole passage represented, not as waiting for them to do something in order to his bestowing good things promised to them on this condition, but declares what shall be, in which he himself is the first mover, and which he will accomplish in and for them, independent of them.

1. One thing promised is, that he would bring them from the state of captivity and affliction in which they now were in Babylon, and resettle them in the land of Canaan in a state of prosperity, and there greatly increase and multiply them.

2. The other thing which God here promises is, that in order to prepare them for this deliverance and prosperity, that it might be for their good and the glory of his name, he would take away the hard, obstinate, impenitent, prayerless heart which they now appeared to have, and give them a new, penitent, obedient, praying heart. They had now no heart to repent, and humble themselves, and seek the Lord, but were stiff-necked, hard-hearted, and most rebellious. (Ezek. ii. iii.) Instead of humbling themselves under God's corrections, they were disposed to justify themselves, and complained that they were injured, and that God's ways towards them were not just and equal. (Ezek. xviii. 33.) God here promises that he will take away this hard, rebellious heart, and give them "a heart of flesh," a penitent heart, a heart to humble themselves, to loathe and abhor themselves for their iniquities and abominations, (Ezek. xviii. 31,) a heart to know their dependence on him, and seek him for that deliverance he had promised to grant. When God says, "I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them," the meaning is, that they should be brought to seek him in a sense of their dependence upon him for that deliverance and enlargement

which he had promised, which is mentioned in the words immediately preceding and following these. And this seeking God is so far from being the condition of their obtaining a humble, penitent, obedient heart, that such a heart is necessary in order to this, and is implied in it. A heart to seek God was a new heart, a heart entirely different from, and opposite to, the temper and disposition they then had, and, therefore, is the very thing promised when God says, "I will give them a heart of flesh."

This restoration of the people of Israel, and return to their own land, after they had been long captivated and oppressed by their enemies, is many times spoken of, and the temper and exercises of mind which they should be brought to, in order to this, is often mentioned in Scripture, and represented by the following expressions: "If they shall confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers, with their trespass which they have trespassed against me, and that also they have walked contrary unto me: if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept the punishment of their iniquity, then will I remember my covenant with Jacob," etc. (Lev. xxvi. 40, 41.) "But if from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart, and with all thy soul. If thou turn to the Lord thy God, and shalt be obedient unto his voice," etc. (Deut. iv. 29, 30.) "And it shall come to pass when all these things are come upon thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among the nations whither the Lord thy God hath driven thee, and shalt return unto the Lord thy God, and shalt obey his voice, according to all that I command thee this day, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity," etc. (Deut. xxx. 1–3.) "And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and thou shalt return and obey the voice of the Lord," etc. (Deut. xxx. 6, 8.) "Yet if they shall bethink themselves in the land whither they shall be carried captives, and repent, and make supplication unto thee, in the land of them that carried them captives, saying, We have sinned, and so return unto thee with all their heart, and with all their soul, and pray unto thee, towards their land, then hear thou their prayer and their supplication," etc. (1 Kings viii. 47–49.) "For I will set mine eyes upon them for good, and I will bring them again to this land. And I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord, and they shall be my people, and I will be their God; for they shall return unto me with their whole heart." (Jer. xxiv. 6, 7.) "Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and

I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. And I will be found of you, saith the Lord, and I will turn away your captivity," etc. (Jer. xxix. 12–14.) "Behold, I will bring them from the north country, etc. They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them." (Jer. xxxi. 8, 9.) "And they that escape of you shall remember me among the nations whither they shall be carried captives, and they shall loathe themselves for the evils which they have committed in all their abominations. And they shall know that I am the Lord." (Ezek. vi. 9, 10.) "And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you, and I will take the stony heart out of your flesh, and will give you a heart of flesh, that they may walk in my statutes." (Ezek. xi. 19, 20.) "A new heart, also, will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. Then shall ye remember your own ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations. Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you; be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel. Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock." (Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27, 31, 32, 37.)

From these passages, thus put together and compared, and duly considered with the context, I think the following things will be evident beyond dispute: —

1. That to have their uncircumcised heart humbled and circumcised to love the Lord, a heart to know the Lord, and a new heart, is the same thing; and that this implies, or is the only foundation of, repentance and turning to the Lord, obeying his voice, doing his commandments, and walking in his statutes with their whole heart, which also implies, and is really the same with confessing their iniquity, loathing themselves for their iniquities and abominations, seeking the Lord, and searching for him with all the heart and with all the soul, praying and making supplications to him, and inquiring of him to do these things for them, i. e., to deliver and save them. The temper and exercises of heart denoted in these several passages, and by these different expressions, are, as to substance, one and the same; at least, any one of these things here mentioned does imply all the rest; so that where that is found, there the others are, as connected with, and implied in it. These Scriptures

cannot be reconciled, or even understood, on any other supposition. The heart with which they were to make supplication to God, inquire of him and seek him for what they wanted, was not an uncircumcised, stupid, ignorant, hard, impenitent, rebellious, proud heart, but a heart of flesh, a penitent, humble, obedient heart; a heart to confess and forsake their sins, and loathe themselves for them.

All these predictions and promises were exemplified and fulfilled in Daniel, Ezra, and Nehemiah, and all the pious Jews who were returned from the Babylonish captivity. They had a new heart; a heart directly opposite to the prevailing temper and disposition of their fathers, who went into captivity. They inquired of God, sought him with their whole heart, for the salvation they needed; and returned with weeping and supplications, with repentance and confession of their sins, and the sins of their fathers. (See Dan. ix. 1–19. Ez. vii. 10; viii. 21–23; ix. 5–15. Neh. i. and ix.) And it may be of use here to observe, that Nehemiah represents the condition of their finding mercy, not to be a seeking God with a hard, impenitent heart, but a penitent, obedient one, which is the same with a desire to fear God's name. "Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandest thy servant Moses, saying, If ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations; but if ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them," etc. "O Lord, I beseech thee, let thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name." (Neh. i. 8, 9–11.)

And as this temporal salvation was promised to seeking God with their whole hearts, and inquiring of him to do it for them, so that eternal salvation, of which this was an emblem, is promised to this same condition. "The humble shall see this and be glad; and your heart shall live that seek God." (Ps. lxix. 32.) "Let all those that seek thee rejoice, and be glad in thee; and let such as love thy salvation say continually, Let God be magnified." (Ps. lxx. 4.) "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord. Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with their whole heart." (Ps. cxix. 1, 2.) "Seek, and ye shall find." (Matt. vii. 7.) "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Rom. x. 13.) But who are they who seek God with their whole hearts? Not the proud, impenitent, disobedient, and hard-hearted; but the humble; they who love the salvation of God, they who are undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord; who have clean hands and a pure heart. (See Ps. xxiv. 3–6.) The Psalmist says, "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance,

will not seek after God." (Ps. x. 4.) And St. Paul tells us, in a quotation from the Psalmist, that there is no man in his natural, unrenewed state, that seeketh after God. (Rom. iii. 11.) And who call upon the name of the Lord? Not the blind, rebellious, and unbelieving, as all the unregenerate are; for how shall they call on him, in whom they have not believed? (Rom. x. 14.)

2. It is also evident that this condition of their deliverance and salvation, the whole of it taken together, is itself promised by God, as what he would work in them. God himself promises not only to deliver them out of captivity, but to circumcise their hearts, to give them a heart of flesh, by which they should become a humble, penitent people, and turn to him, and seek him with all their heart, as a proper preparative for the outward deliverance he had promised. When God says, in the text under consideration, "I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them," it is to be considered as a promise that he will bring them to this, by giving them a humble, praying heart, which they were far from then; which, therefore, must be a new heart. God promises that he will bring them to seek him with their whole hearts, which is expressed thus in words before cited: "They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them." But they could not be brought to this while their hearts were uncircumcised, and hearts of stone; but in order to this, God must circumcise their hearts to love him, and give them a heart of flesh; and it was impossible to accomplish it in any other way. So far is this seeking God from being antecedent to a new heart, and required, as what must take place in order to it.

What do they mean who flatter sinners that they may sincerely and heartily, or with their whole hearts, seek a new heart, as the condition of obtaining it, and that to which a new heart is promised? Are not all the exercises of an impenitent, rebellious heart, impenitent, rebellious exercises? and does not the old heart perfectly hate and oppose a new heart? Does not the flesh lust against the spirit? and are not these contrary the one to the other? What sincerity and heartiness, then, is there in asking for a new heart with a heart so perfectly opposite to the thing asked for? The doctor says, "It were highly absurd to suppose that a man must have a new heart, in order to his inquiring of, or seeking God, in such a manner as to obtain such a heart of him." It may be replied, Not more absurd than to suppose that a person under the dominion of a hard, impenitent, rebellious heart, does, with such a heart, even with all his heart, desire a humble, broken

heart, and truly and sincerely seek for it. For this is as absurd as to suppose that sin and obstinacy itself is reconciled to holiness and subjection to God's law. There is no such thing supposed in the Bible; nor will common sense admit of it, however commonly it has been supposed, and though the doctor has done it, not only in the argument under consideration, but through all his performance.

On the whole, does it not appear beyond contradiction, from this view of the case, that inquiring of God, in the text under consideration, is the same with what is called by Jeremiah, when speaking of the same thing, seeking God, and searching for him with their *whole hearts*, and that this is seeking God with a new heart? If so, the doctor has wholly perverted this passage. I have been the more particular on this text, because it is so strangely misunderstood, not only by the doctor, but by many others.

The doctor takes his twelfth argument from the following words of the apostle Peter: "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue; whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these you might be made partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." (2 Pet. i. 3, 4.)

By the "things pertaining to life and godliness," the doctor understands the external privileges of the gospel, among which he reckons "the great and precious promises," the end of which, he says, is, our being made "partakers of the divine nature," which is the same with a new heart; and "escaping the corruptions that are in the world through lusts," he takes to be the same with striving to enter in at the strait gate; and he finally observes, "that this divine nature or new heart is given in a way of promise, or in the fulfilment of the promises." Hence he infers that there are promises of a new heart to the unregenerate who strive to enter in at the strait gate.

If by "all things pertaining to life and godliness" are meant the gifts, qualifications, and peculiar advantages bestowed by the divine power, even that mighty power which is exercised towards them who believe, (Eph. i. 19,) bestowed, I say, on true Christians, to whom the apostle is speaking, who have obtained precious faith, through or in the righteousness of God, and our Savior Jesus Christ, (verse 1,) — if by "exceeding great and precious promises" are meant the promises of all good things, made to God's people, but more especially of the heavenly inheritance, — and by "partaking of the divine nature is meant this perfect purity and holiness for which all

true Christians are candidates; for which they are longing, and to which they shall all be finally brought," — and by "escaping the corruption that is in the world through lust is meant crucifying the flesh with the affections and lusts purifying ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God, (2 Cor. vii. 1,) and purifying ourselves as Christ is pure," (1 John iii. 3,) being encouraged and animated hereto by the great and precious promises made to the people and servants of God, thus to "press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus," (Phil. iii. 14,) "not being slothful, but followers of them who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises," (Heb. i. 12;) I say, if these several phrases are thus understood, the true sense of the whole passage will be found in the following paraphrase: —

"I Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, write this epistle to all true believers. My beloved brethren, as you have entered upon the Christian life, so I earnestly wish you may make great progress, and that all divine gifts and graces may be multiplied and abound, in and by an increase in the knowledge of God and the Savior. This it is most proper for me to wish for you, and I am especially encouraged to do it, since by the exceeding greatness of God's power, which has been exercised towards every one that believeth, you have been raised from the dead, and quickened by the partaking of spiritual life and true holiness, in the knowledge of him who has hereby effectually called and furnished you to press on to the perfect holiness and glory of his eternal kingdom.

"And has also given you exceeding great and precious promises, that by these you might be encouraged and animated to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord, cleansing yourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, in the denial of all ungodliness and every worldly lust."

Very parallel to these words are those of St. Paul. "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." (2 Cor. vii. 1.) And several other passages which might be mentioned.

The most natural and easy sense of these words, and the most agreeable to parallel passages of Scripture, being given, there appears to be no foundation in them for the argument the doctor attempts to find in them. It is therefore needless particularly to show how groundless and forced is the meaning which he puts upon them.

The doctor's arguments have been now, I trust, fairly and fully considered. And it must be left to those who interest

themselves in this question to judge, whether he has in any measure proved that there are any promises in the Bible of regenerating grace or salvation, to the doings of the unregenerate. The doctor is very sanguine in the matter, and concludes that he has produced, "not only satisfactory and conclusive evidence of it, but a full blaze of it, so as to take away even the possibility of doubt from any person of a tolerable comprehension of mind, who seriously attends to it, unless he is under the influence of some very unhappy, though he does not say criminal, prejudice." On which side the evidence lies, where the prejudice is, and how far criminal, let the unprejudiced judge. That all may be under the better advantage to do this, the following sections are added.

SECTION VII.

A short and plain State of the Case.

While we have been attending to the doctor's state of the question, and his arguments to support the tenet he espouses, some things have been said which, it is hoped, will help to set this matter in a true light. However, it may not be improper here to collect the whole of this kind, so as to give a plain, short view of the case.

Man is not only by sin plunged into a state of infinite guilt, from which he cannot be delivered, consistent with the law and moral government he is under, unless he is interested in, or united to, the Mediator, but he has also by his apostasy lost the moral image of God, or all true holiness; and consequently is wholly corrupt, and under the dominion of appetites and inclinations directly contrary to God and his law.* This

* Dr. Mayhew allows that men are destitute of all true holiness until they are born again, or have a new heart given them in regeneration. Yet he represents the exercises and doings of the unregenerate, as having something of the nature of obedience to God in them, and therefore good; and consequently not wholly unpleasing to God. I should be glad to know of the doctor what that obedience is which falls wholly short of true holiness. If it is obedience to God's law, it is true holiness, if there is any such thing in nature; if it is not obedience to God's law, how and in what sense is it any obedience at all? He will be pleased also to tell us what that is in the exercises and doings of the unregenerate which is of the nature of *good*, and yet has nothing of the nature of true holiness. The world has yet found out but two sorts of good, viz., natural and moral — holiness and happiness. But as the doctor means neither of these by the good that is found with unregenerate men, he would oblige the world if he would tell what this new-discovered *good* is.

The doctor's representing the doings of wicked men as good, and in some degree pleasing to God, brings to my mind the words of Malachi, (chap. ii. 17.) "Ye have wearied the Lord with your words. Yet ye say, Wherein have

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is the carnal mind, which the Scripture says "is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." (Rom. viii. 7.) This corruption or viciousness of heart being so great and universal, the sinner will not repent, or have any right exercises towards God and his law, until his heart is in some degree renewed and set right. In this state the gospel finds man; in which pardon and salvation, through a Mediator, are freely offered to his acceptance, and all are invited to come to Christ, believe on him and trust in him, for all they want; being assured that, on this condition, Christ, with all his benefits, shall be theirs.

But as the way in which this salvation is given is in a peculiar manner adapted to do honor to the law which the sinner has broken, and vindicate the divine character, to which he is a perfect enemy; and as the Savior himself, in all he has done in the character of a Mediator, has, above all others, condemned sin, and manifested his love of righteousness and hatred of iniquity; and as the salvation itself which he gives consists summarily in deliverance from sin, and the exercise and enjoyment of true holiness, — the sinner is in a peculiar manner an enemy to the gospel, to the Mediator, viewed in his true character, to the way in which he saves sinners, and to the salvation itself. And he always continues so while an enemy to holiness, and an impenitent; or until his heart is changed, and he comes to a new temper and disposition. This change of the corrupt heart is, in Scripture, spoken of as the work of the Spirit of God, in which sinners are said to be born of the Spirit; to have the stony heart taken away, and a heart of flesh, or a new heart, given; to be quickened, or made alive from the dead; created in Christ Jesus unto good works. It is also called the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.

As men do in their natural state, with their whole hearts, reject the good things offered in the gospel, and their doing so is wholly owing to an inexcusable wickedness of heart, God is not obliged, in reason or justice, to remove this voluntary, wicked, inexcusable opposition, and bring them to a willing compliance with his proposals. Neither has he obliged himself to do this for any, by promises to any thing which

we wearied him? When ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delighteth in them." Our Savior says, "A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit." Very agreeable to this, a noted author well observes, "It is the good tree *only* that bringeth forth good fruit; and it is *only* a good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, that bringeth forth good things. A holy principle within is considered in Scripture as prior to good works, the latter being the exertions and operations of the former." (Dr. Mayhew's Sermons on various Subjects, p. 191.)

they shall do, as the condition of it. Therefore, whenever, and in whatever instance, God takes away the heart of stone and gives a new heart, he acts as being unobliged, or sovereignly, and bestows an unpromised favor; and so "has mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth;" i. e., leaves under the dominion of a hard, stony heart. But when God gives a new heart in regeneration, a foundation is laid in the mind for a discerning of the truths of the gospel in their real beauty and excellency, (to which the unregenerate heart, or the mind under the dominion of lust, is wholly blind,) and for those right exercises, in which faith or Christian holiness consists. And all the promises of the gospel are made to these exercises of the mind, in which the mind discerns divine truth in some measure as it is, and heartily embraces the gospel. And the first exercise of this kind entitles the person to all divine promises; to pardon of sin and eternal life, and to all those divine influences by which he shall persevere in faith and holiness, until he shall be perfectly delivered from all sin, and awake complete in God's likeness.

There must, therefore, be a distinction kept up between regeneration, which is the work of God in giving a new heart, and in which men are perfectly passive, and active conversion in which men, being regenerated, turn from sin to God, in the exercise of repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ; and in consequence of which they are pardoned and received to favor, and a title to eternal life, and have the gift of the Spirit to dwell with them forever, as an abiding principle of life and holiness. All this, with every benefit which men receive by Christ, is promised to those who believe or heartily embrace the gospel, and not to regeneration; for to this, considered as antecedent to all action, and only as the foundation of right exercise, no promise is made. Neither are those influences by which men are regenerated in this sense meant by giving or receiving the Spirit, as the Spirit of promise, by which believers, and they only, are sealed to the day of redemption. But men receive the Spirit, in this sense, as a Spirit of adoption, by which all God's children are led by faith, or a hearty receiving Christ with all his benefits. (See John i. 12. Gal. iii. 14, 26. Eph. i. 13.) They who will not make and understand this distinction, must think and talk in some measure unintelligibly on this point.

This change, therefore, called *regeneration*, by which a new heart is given, as the foundation of all true discerning of the things of God's moral kingdom, and of all right exercises of heart; this change, I say, wrought by the Spirit of God, immediately and instantaneously, and altogether imperceptibly

to the person who is the subject of it, — it being impossible that he should know what God has done for him but by a consciousness of his own views and exercises, which are the fruit and consequence of the divine operation, — these views and exercises of the regenerate, in which they turn from sin to God, or embrace the gospel, are often in Scripture spoken of as included in that change which is called *a being born again;* as all the change which is perceptible, and in which man is active, consists in this. And this is sometimes called, by divines, *active conversion*, to distinguish it from regeneration, or that change in which men are passive.

Men being washed by regeneration and renewed by the Holy Ghost, the hard, rebellious heart being subdued in a degree, and a new and opposite bias, which is by our Savior called an *honest* and *good heart*, being given, the light and truth of God's word enters into the mind, and it discerns the things of the Spirit of God in their reality, beauty, wisdom, glory; and in this view and sense of divine truth the heart approves of the divine character, comes to Christ for life, or believes on him, and sincerely and heartily asks for the Spirit, or that living water which Christ gives, and which comprehends all good things. And to this hungering and thirsting after righteousness, coming to Christ, believing on him and trusting in him; to this asking, knocking, seeking, divine promises are made, even to the first and lowest degree of this kind of exercise. To such the Spirit is given as a fountain, "a well of living water springing up into everlasting life." (John iv. 14.) And by this actively cleaving to Jesus Christ, in a view of his true character as Mediator and Savior, and uniting themselves to him, a proper foundation is laid for their being looked upon and treated as being in him, and in a sense one with him; so that on his account, out of respect to his merit and worthiness, they are pardoned and received to favor; they become the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, and heirs of eternal life. And as they have thus received Christ Jesus the Lord, so they walk in him; the life they live is by faith on the Son of God, and consists in cleaving to Christ in all proper ways, in coming to him, living upon him, asking and receiving all good things from him as a free gift to the infinitely unworthy.

The unregenerate sinner may be in a sort convinced in his judgment and conscience that he has by his sin exposed himself to eternal destruction; that he can be delivered from this evil and obtain salvation only by Jesus Christ, by coming to him and believing on him, and that in order to this he must have a new heart given him by God. And he may have such a sense of his danger and misery and of the awful consequence

of sin, as to fill his mind with great uneasiness and distress. This may, while it continues, deaden him to all carnal gratifications, and make him afraid to indulge himself in any overt acts of known sin, and lead him to make deliverance from future misery his great concern, and earnestly to seek this in the use of all means; being all attention to the great concerns of his soul, and a future world. But all this does not alter the reigning temper and disposition of the heart. There may be yet no more true hatred of sin than before, and a reigning enmity against the divine character, and law, and against the gospel; and the heart may therefore be as far from repentance and acceptance of offered salvation by Jesus Christ as ever, and really reject and abhor the good things offered in the gospel, and so be far from truly desiring and asking for them. And this is certainly the case with every unregenerate person, whatever concern and exercises he may have about the salvation of his soul, and whatever he may pretend and think of himself. If he thinks better of himself, as thousands do, it is all delusion. And they who go about to strengthen and confirm men in such delusion are strengthening the cause of the prince of darkness, instead of promoting the interest of Christ, and the salvation of sinners.

I shall, therefore, think myself doing God service, and that which tends to promote the good of mankind, while I attempt to prove that there are no promises of regenerating grace or salvation made to these exercises and doings of the unregenerate in the Holy Scripture. This is the design of the following section.

SECTION VIII.

Arguments to prove that there are no Promises of regenerating Grace or Salvation, in the Scripture, to the Exercises and Doings of Unregenerate Men.

That the doctor's arguments to support the affirmative of the question before us are by no means satisfactory and conclusive, I have endeavored to show. I shall now attempt to prove the negative, by suggesting, as briefly as I can, some of the most obvious arguments which have occurred to my mind.

Arg. 1. That there are no promises of regenerating grace made to the exercises and doings of the unregenerate, may be argued from many particular passages in Holy Scripture.

In Scripture men are required to repent and believe, and

turn to God, on pain of eternal damnation, and are declared to be in a state of condemnation until they do so. "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." (Luke xiii. 3.) "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God." (John iii. 18.) "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." (John v. 36.) "He that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark xvi. 16.) If he that believeth not shall be damned, is now under condemnation, and has the wrath of God abiding on him, surely he has not at the same time, even while he does not believe, a promise of God's favor and eternal life; for to be condemned, and under God's wrath, and to be interested in the promises of God's favor and eternal life at the same time, is a contradiction, and absolutely impossible. But if the promises of the gospel are made to the doings of unregenerate sinners, then they have a title to God's favor and eternal salvation, antecedent to faith, or while they are unbelievers; and, therefore, while they are condemned and under the doom of eternal damnation. They are therefore, at the same time, interested in all the divine promises, under God's favor and smiles, and accepted of him to a title to life; and yet under all the curses written in God's book, in a state of condemnation, and under the wrath of God. We cannot avoid this glaring absurdity and contradiction, without concluding that there are no promises of saving mercy made to sinners, upon any condition short of faith in Jesus Christ; and therefore may be sure there are no such promises.*

* Dr. Mayhew himself asserts, that all unregenerate men are under a sentence of condemnation and death. "As sinful creatures," says he, "we are already exposed to perdition from the avenging justice of God; yea, we are actually under a sentence of condemnation and death, till such time as we are delivered therefrom, by having an interest in the redemption wrought out by Christ. For it is to them only that are in Christ Jesus, and so in him as to walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit, that there is no condemnation." How he will reconcile this with unregenerate persons who are not, even according to him, in Christ, and do not walk after the Spirit but after the flesh, being interested in promises of God's eternal favor, while such, and on the account of what they have done, I am not able to imagine. He may, perhaps, attempt it now, though he once very justly thought it impossible. This appears from the following words of his: "There are no promises of future glory and happiness made in the Scriptures to impenitent, persevering transgressors. They are all made to those who confess and forsake their sins. The gospel is so far from giving any title to future glory to the impenitent workers of iniquity, that it expressly condemns them, and cuts them off from it." [He, having cited several passages of Scripture to prove this, goes on in the following words, which are worthy of special note:] "It is not surely possible that the same gospel which speaks thus to, and of, the wicked and disobedient, condemning them to future woe and punishment, should, at the same time, entitle them, by its promises, to life everlasting." (Sermons on several Subjects, p. 221.)

It seems the doctor now believes that there are promises of future glory and

Again: the first thirteen verses in the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans seem not consistent with the notion that there are promises of salvation to the unregenerate. It is there said that "to be carnally minded is death." (Rom. viii. 6.) And that they who "live after the flesh shall die." (Rom. viii. 13.) And they are represented as in a state of condemnation. (Rom. viii. 1.) And here all are represented as carnally minded, and being in the flesh, and walking after the flesh, who have not the spirit of Christ, and do not walk after the Spirit. (Rom. viii. 4, 9.) But unregenerate persons have not the spirit of Christ, and do not walk in the Spirit; therefore, they are those who are in the flesh, and walk after the flesh.

All unregenerate persons then are, according to this, in a state of condemnation and death, and are in the way to eternal destruction. But this cannot be true if any, while in an unregenerate state, have a title to life, or are interested in the promises of salvation. For he who has a title to life, or is doing that to which the promises of salvation are made, is not in the way to death, but in that which leadeth to life; neither is there any condemnation to him. They who assert that there are promises of God's favor and eternal life to the exercises and doings of unregenerate men, point out a way for them to walk in, while they are in the flesh and walk after the flesh, which, they say, is the way to life, and by walking in which they shall not die, but live. But St. Paul says it is the way to death, and by walking in it they shall die, none being free from condemnation and in the way to life but they who have the Spirit of God dwelling in them, do live after the Spirit, do, through the Spirit, mortify the deeds of the body, are in the Spirit, and led by the Spirit, and so are the sons of God. Therefore, these men do not agree with, but directly contradict St. Paul, or, rather, the Holy Ghost speaking by him.

St. Paul here divides men into two classes, and no more: one are the sons of God, who have the spirit of Christ dwelling in them, who walk after the Spirit, and are led by the Spirit, and through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body. These are free from condemnation and death, and in the sure way to life. In the opposite class are comprehended all others; who, being in the flesh, and walking after the flesh,

happiness made in Scripture to impenitent, hard-hearted sinners, and who do not confess and forsake their sins; and that it is very possible that the same gospel which condemns unbelievers to future woe and punishment, does, at the same time, entitle them, by its promises, to life everlasting, and has wrote a book to prove it. But as there is a real impossibility and direct contradiction in the case, no wonder his attempt has proved very unsuccessful.

are in a state of condemnation, and in the way which leadeth to eternal destruction. This is exactly agreeable to our Savior's representation, when he speaks of but two ways in which men are going, viz., the broad way which leadeth to destruction, and the narrow way which leadeth to life. The former is the way of the ungodly, the unholy, the unregenerate, who walk after the flesh, are under the dominion of a carnal mind, which is enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. The latter is the way of good men, the way of righteousness, the way of holiness, in which the redeemed, and none but such, do walk.*

Moreover, it is observable, that when the apostles went forth to preach the gospel, they never directed men who applied to them to know what they should do to be saved to any endeavors and doings short of true repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, as what would save them; but expressly told them that they must repent and believe on Christ in order to this. (Acts ii. 37, 38; xvi. 30, 31.) And St. Paul speaks of his preaching as consisting, summarily, in inculcating "repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ." (Acts xx. 21.)

Now, we cannot account for this, on supposition the endeavors and doings of men — which are short of repentance and faith — are the condition of salvation, having the promise of it made to them. For, were this the case, they must have directed them to these endeavors and doings as what they must do in order to be saved, and by doing which they should certainly obtain the salvation they inquired after. And this must have been the drift and sum of their preaching, and not repentance and faith, such as, indeed, has been the preaching of many since that time. We may, therefore, be sure the apostles did not believe there were any promises made to doings short of repentance and faith in Christ, but that these were the lowest condition of salvation. This leads me to

Arg. 2. To suppose that there are promises of salvation made to the doings of unregenerate persons, is to make these doings the condition of salvation, and not faith or repentance, or, indeed, any thing else which the Scripture represents as such.

That to which the promises of life and salvation are made, so that he who has it, or attains to it, has a sure title to salvation, is certainly the condition of salvation; but the exercises and doings of the unregenerate are this condition, if

* See a more full representation of this, p. 195.

promises of salvation are made to them. Yea, according to this, the doings of the unregenerate are the condition, and only condition, of justification. For they who have a title to God's favor, and eternal life, are no longer in a state of condemnation, as has been shown; to have a title to God's special, eternal love and favor, and be heir of eternal life, certainly implies every thing that is contained in justification. If, then, men are not forgiven till they repent of their sins, are justified by faith, and, therefore, not until they believe and heartily embrace the gospel, — in short, if one tittle of the New Testament is true, there are no promises of salvation made to the doings of the unregenerate.*

Arg. 3. That there are no promises of salvation made to the exercises and doings of the unregenerate will be evident, if it be considered that such do, with their whole hearts, oppose the way of salvation by Christ, and reject the salvation offered by him. That this is true of all the unregenerate, has been shown; † so that there is no need of dwelling long upon it here. It has been observed, that in this men's unregeneracy consists, so that to suppose them to be in any degree friendly to the gospel at heart, is to suppose them to be regenerate; or, at least, that they stand in no need of regeneration, in order to salvation. To suppose the unregenerate are not at heart enemies to the way of salvation by Christ, and that any of the exercises of their hearts about this salvation are not consistent with enmity against, and opposition to it, is to take away all distinction between the regenerate and unregenerate; to be sure, it takes away that by which alone they are distinguished in Scripture. If any are at a loss about this, let them read their Bibles over with a special view to this point, and then let them tell what is meant by the unregenerate, what unregeneracy consists in, and what regeneration is, on supposition the unregenerate do not with their whole hearts reject Jesus Christ and oppose the way of salvation by him, as being enemies to God and the Savior. If they are not willing to be at this pains, let them turn to the eighth chapter to the Romans, the passage just now under consideration. There it is said, "The carnal mind is enmity against God — is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." That

* "Whatsoever is necessary according to the terms laid down in the gospel, in order to our having a title to eternal life in the kingdom of heaven, is necessary in order to our being justified in this world. But in order to our having such a title, it is necessary that we repent of our sins, and obey the gospel; this is, therefore, necessary in order to justification." (Dr. Mayhew's Sermon on Justification by Faith, p. 219.)

† See Section III.

by the carnal mind is meant the unregenerate heart, in distinction from those who are spiritually minded, have the spirit of Christ, and walk after the Spirit, who love God, and are his children, has been just now proved. And I know not how any one can doubt of this who will carefully read that chapter. But if the carnal, unregenerate heart is full of enmity against God and his law, it is equally an enemy to Jesus Christ and the gospel; for the divine character and the holy law of God are more fully vindicated and honored, and are set in a clearer view, by Jesus Christ in the gospel, than otherwise they could be, and are so interwoven through the whole gospel scheme, that it cannot be understood and approved of, any further than God's law, and his character therein expressed, are seen and loved, and, therefore, every degree of enmity against God and his law is, to the same degree, and in a peculiar manner, enmity against Christ and the gospel.

Now, that exercises of enmity against Christ, and opposition to the gospel and the salvation therein revealed and offered, or those which are consistent with this, are made the condition of a title to, and interest in, this salvation, so as that all the promises of the gospel are made to such exercises and acts, I presume none will believe. This seems to be so self-evident, that it is needless to go about to prove it. Nothing, therefore, seems necessary to decide the point we are upon, but to keep in view the true state of the case, and attend to the real character of the unregenerate, and the nature and quality of all their actions.

It is therefore observable, that men, in arguing that there are promises to the doings of the unregenerate, do always overlook the true character of such, and of their exercises; yea, suppose them to be in a degree friendly to Christ and the salvation by him. In order to prove that there are promises to the unregenerate, they dress them up in the character which belongs only to the regenerate; so that, by stripping them of this disguise, the boasted arguments vanish into nothing but weakness and absurdity, and the truth arises into view, and becomes clear beyond dispute.*

Arg. 4. If salvation is offered to all who heartily desire it, really choose and accept of it, and so truly ask for it, it is offered on terms low enough, as low as any can reasonably desire; yea, on the lowest conceivable or even possible terms. But no unregenerate person comes up to these terms. Therefore, salvation is not offered or promised to any doings of the unregenerate.

* How far this is true of Dr. Mayhew's performance, which has been under consideration, they who have read the foregoing section must judge.

If a free gift is offered and promised to any one that desires it, and is willing to take it, it cannot be offered on lower or easier terms. If any should say, "Yes, it may be offered or promised to a person, whether he will have it or no, so that he shall have it, even contrary to his will and choice;" I answer, This is not to offer it on lower and easier terms. It is not to offer it on any terms; neither is it properly any offer or promise at all. It is only a declaration of what shall be; which is, all things considered, contrary to the will and inclination of the person. But indeed there can be no such declaration properly and truly made. A person while unwilling to accept of and have any gift and enjoyment, and while he rejects it with his whole heart, is not capable of receiving it, or of cordially entertaining the offer of it; and, therefore, is not a subject capable of such an offer, with a promise that it shall be his, even while he undervalues, despises, and refuses to receive it. If it is offered with a promise that it shall be his as soon as he is heartily willing to accept of it, and upon this condition only, it is offered on the lowest terms that ever any offer was or can be made. Now, it is granted that the gospel offers salvation to all who will accept of it, or are truly willing to have it; but as no unregenerate person is thus willing to accept of salvation, no such one ever did, or ever will, come up to these lowest possible terms on which salvation is offered and promised.* It would be highly absurd and ridiculous to offer that to any one which is the object of his peculiar aversion and hatred, under the notion of its being his by something he is to do as the condition of it, while he continues thus averse to it; and, therefore, no such offer was ever seriously and really made. We may, therefore, be certain God has never done this; but that the lowest terms on which salvation is offered and promised imply a real choice of this salvation, or a hearty acceptance of it.†

If it should here be said, that though unregenerate sinners are not willing to accept of salvation which is freely offered, and that this is both their sin and calamity, yet God may offer them regenerating grace, and promise to bring them to a willingness to accept of salvation, by giving them a new heart, upon terms which they, while unregenerate, may come up to; and so regeneration, and consequently the whole of salvation,

* This last proposition has been proved in the third section, and under the last argument.

† Dr. Mayhew has supposed and allowed this, through the whole course of his arguments, and in all he says upon this subject, as the attentive reader has observed. The only thing he can dispute is, that the unregenerate do not come up to these terms. When he will prove they do, he will gain his point. For this, therefore, the public must wait on him.

may be connected with this condition, which really is something short of a hearty acceptance of salvation, — for this is one thing promised to be given, and is implied in regeneration, — I answer: If we suppose the grace of regeneration or a new heart, which implies a heart to accept of and trust in Christ for salvation, to be offered and promised to the unregenerate, on some condition which they are to come up to and perform while unregenerate, yet still this is an offer of that to which their hearts are as much averse as to salvation itself; they are as far from accepting of such an offer as they are from accepting of salvation, and reject and despise it as much. The grace of regeneration, or a new heart, is as contrary to the unregenerate heart as salvation or holiness itself; the unregenerate do oppose and reject this with their whole hearts; for it is supposed their hearts are now in direct opposition to the new heart offered, otherwise they would stand in no need of a new heart. If, therefore, God offers and promises to give them a new heart, on any condition, which consists in their exercises and doings, he makes this offer and promise to exercises and doings which imply, or are consistent with, a real opposition to, and rejection of, the thing offered and promised. The unregenerate heart hates and opposes a new heart, just as much as it does the divine character and law, or Jesus Christ and the gospel; and, therefore, is no more willing to receive the former than the latter, but rejects it with perfect abhorrence. Therefore, there is nothing which the unregenerate may be supposed to do, in order to obtain a new heart, which is not itself an act of opposition, or consistent with the most perfect opposition, to that which he is supposed to be seeking. For instance: if we should suppose that God offers and promises to give the unregenerate a new heart, on condition they will ask him for such a favor, this must mean an asking without any true desire of the thing asked for; yea, an asking which is consistent with an opposing and rejecting the favor offered; and, therefore, really no asking at all for a new heart, but for something else. For so far as the new heart is opposite to the heart of the unregenerate, just so far does the unregenerate heart oppose and hate the new heart, and reject the offer of it; and that constantly, and in all its exercises which have any relation to, and respect the new heart, which is the thing offered.

Thus it appears that there is the same difficulty and absurdity in supposing that a new heart is offered and promised to the doings of the unregenerate, by which they would become willing to accept of Christ and salvation, as there is in supposing that eternal life is offered on some condition lower than a real willingness to accept of it.

In a word, if we will not go beyond reason and plain common sense in this matter, we shall conclude, that whatever offer of any favor or free gift God makes to men, he offers it to their free acceptance, and promises that on this condition it shall be theirs; and, consequently, that they can have no title to it on any condition short of a hearty acceptance of it; and that an offer made to a lower or easier condition cannot be reasonably desired, or even supposed. Therefore, God in the gospel makes no offers and promises of salvation, or of any thing connected with it, to the exercises and doings of the unregenerate.

Arg. 5. For God to offer and promise salvation to those who with their whole hearts hate and reject Jesus Christ in his character of Mediator, would be altogether unbecoming, and really inconsistent with the gospel, and overthrow it. The gospel opens a way of salvation for sinners through a Mediator, in which they are pardoned, and received to favor and a title to everlasting life, purely out of respect to his merits and worthiness; so on his account and in his name. And in this way alone can God pardon the sinner, receive him to favor, and bestow eternal life on him, consistent with his honor and in a way becoming his character as supreme Lawgiver and Judge. But to pardon the sinner and receive him to favor, and promise eternal life to him, while he remains an enemy to this Mediator, and opposes and rejects him in this character, would be to act directly contrary to this plan, and really to dishonor the Mediator, and set him aside.

Therefore, in the gospel, sinners are represented as being saved (i. e., brought into a state of pardon and acceptance with God, and to a title to eternal life) by the blood of Christ; or by his merit and worthiness being imputed to them or reckoned to their account. Accordingly, it is by virtue of their union to him, or being in him, that they are delivered from condemnation, justified, etc. In this way God may be just, may act a wise and honorable part, so as in no degree to injure his own character as moral Governor, even while he justifies, pardons, and promises salvation to him who, though infinitely unworthy and ill deserving in himself, believeth in Jesus the Mediator; i. e., who, in a view of his true character, heartily approves and accepts of him, so as actively to unite himself to him, and be in him. (Rom. iii. 26; v. 1, 2; viii. 12.) He being thus in Christ, a proper foundation is laid for his being interested in the Mediator's merits and worthiness, so that he is received to favor and a title to eternal life purely out of respect to him. Therefore, all the promises of God to sinners are said to be *in him*, unto the glory of God. (2 Cor.

i. 20.) They would not all be in him, if sinners were interested in them while they continued to hate and reject him, so were out of him; consequently would not be to the glory of God, as this would be directly contrary to the plan of pardoning and receiving sinners to a title to life in and by a Mediator.*

* Dr. Mayhew spends some time to answer an objection against there being any promises to the doings of the unregenerate, viz., that this supposes God to make promises to these actions which are not truly holy. If truly holy actions might be done by men, and yet they continue out of Christ and in opposition to him, as the unregenerate do, it must be confessed there would be no more reason why divine promises should be made to them than to actions which are not holy, for all sinners considered as out of Christ, or not united to him so as to be interested in his merits, are on a level in this respect, whether holy or unholy; they are infinitely unworthy and ill deserving, and cannot be received to favor with God, and a title to life, until they are united to the Mediator so as to be interested in his merit and worthiness. If the doctor therefore represents this objection in its full strength and import, it must be owned it is as feeble as he supposes it to be. But if the objectors mean that the unregenerate do nothing in that holy manner which is necessary in order to their hearts being united to Christ the Mediator, so as to be a proper ground of their being accepted in him, the doctor has not in the least degree answered the objection. There may be a sufficient reason why no promises should be made to the exercises of sinners which have no degree of holiness in them, viz., because such exercises do not unite to Christ, or imply any union of heart to him, but the contrary. It has been observed that the gospel, or Christ, and the way of salvation by him, are so holy that the unholy heart cannot be pleased with, but must hate and oppose them. Therefore, that exercise of heart by which sinners embrace the gospel, or unite themselves to Jesus Christ by an acceptance of him, must be a holy exercise. In this view it is unreasonable and absurd to suppose that there are any promises of salvation made to the unholy doings of sinners, and therefore the objection stands good. But there may be good reason why salvation should be promised to the holy exercises of the regenerate; because, however imperfect they are, they are really an acceptance of Christ, and unite them to him; so that they lay a proper foundation for their being accepted in him, and receiving a title to the heavenly inheritance for his sake. For, as the doctor well expresses it, "it is for Christ's sake that these promises are made to them." But it has been shown that such promises cannot be made for Christ's sake to those who hate and reject Jesus Christ. But if promises are made to such, heaven and Christ himself are promised to them for their own sakes, or rather, for the sake of their own unholy, wicked exercises and doings.

The doctor, indeed, endeavors to palliate this matter a little. What he says is to this effect: "The temper and actions of his strivers are really different from those who are proceeding headlong in their criminal courses; and to say the least, are not so displeasing to God. And their doings may properly be called obedience to God, and therefore have something of the nature of *good*, and so cannot be wholly unpleasing to God. It must therefore render them more suitable objects of his favor and mercy than these are who do not strive, but commit iniquity with greediness." The doctor seems to be conscious that there must be some *good* qualification in the sinner in order to render him a suitable object of God's favor and mercy, otherwise he would not take so much pains to find something of this kind in those whom he supposes the objects of this favor. But what does he mean by their being suitable, or more suitable objects of God's favor and mercy, antecedent to their union to Christ, and interest in his worthiness, and considered as in themselves? Does he mean there is a proper moral suitableness or fitness — some moral excellency which recommends to God's favor, as a reason why they should have mercy rather than others? If this is the case, then they need not the merit of Christ to recommend them to God's favor, for they have, upon this supposition, merit

I have now produced some of the principal arguments which occurred to me, to prove that there are no promises of salvation made to the doings of the unregenerate. I am far from concluding that these are the strongest and best that might be thought of, or that they are set in the most striking and convincing light possible. Whether they are conclusive or not, let the attentive, impartial reader judge.

SECTION IX.

Containing an Answer to two Objections.

Obj. 1. It is said that the doctrine contended for in the preceding section is greatly to the dishonor of God's goodness, and even inconsistent with it.

Dr. Mayhew insists upon it, that such a notion is inconsistent with the appearance of any goodness of God to sinners, in the offers made to them in the gospel; yea, that it is not consistent with justice. And agreeably to this, he looks on what he has done, in proving that there are promises to the doings of the unregenerate, as "a clear and full vindication, both of the justice and goodness of God."

Answer. This objection seems to have its foundation in a supposition for which there is no ground, and is indeed directly contrary to the truth of the case, viz., that if salvation is not offered and promised to the exercises and endeavors of unregenerate men, then it is offered to them on terms impracticable, though they are never so well disposed, and have a good will in the case, and so are not at all to blame for not coming up to the terms proposed; there being some difficulty in the case which is insurmountable, however good and great their inclination and desire may be to do it. As the objectors seem to view the case, it may be represented by the following comparison: A certain lord, as he was visiting one of his plantations, saw a large building on fire, and when he came to it he found a number of his servants confined in it. He, knowing their situation, calls to them, tells them the dreadful case they are in, and earnestly calls upon them to arise and come to the door, with a promise

enough of their own to answer this end. The doctor repeatedly disclaims the notion of merit; but if this is what he means, he holds to the doctrine of merit to all intents. If any sinner has any moral good or worth which recommends him to the divine favor on the account of its acceptableness in God's sight, and on this account is a reason why God shows favor to him rather than to another, he has as real merit as it is possible any creature should have, though it may not be to so great a degree. But if by being a suitable or fit object of God's favor he means any other kind of fitness, he would oblige us by showing what it is.

that upon their so doing he will unlock it, and deliver them. At the same time, both he and they know that they are fastened down with chains which they have been trying with all their might to deliver themselves from, but find it impossible. They cry to him for help, and do their utmost, but all in vain; he stands by and sees them perish in the devouring flames! Dr. Mayhew represents the state much in this light in many passages in his sermons, as well as in the following words: "Is there any real kindness, mercy, or goodness, in offering salvation to guilty creatures, and inviting them to accept it, on such terms as are to them impracticable, though they desire it and strive to this end? Impracticable, I mean, with all the helps and advantages that God affords, or will afford to them, though they seek them in the best manner their circumstances will admit of. I must confess I cannot see any goodness herein."

I am as ready to confess as the doctor, that were the case as is here supposed, there would be no goodness, or propriety in the offers of the gospel. But in truth, it is, as it were, infinitely otherwise. There is no difficulty in the sinner's complying with the offers of the gospel, but what lies in his want of an inclination and true desire to accept the salvation offered, and a strong and obstinate inclination to the contrary. The case really is as if the above-mentioned lord should find his servants in the house consuming by fire, confined by nothing but their own inclination and lust, all engaged in gaming and drinking; he opens the door and calls upon them to escape for their lives, and promises them that if they are willing to come to him, and engage in his service, they shall be safe and happy. But they have such a dislike to his person and service, and are so attached to their gaming, etc., that they absolutely refuse to comply with the proposal. They had rather run the venture of perishing in the flames, and continue there under the repeated admonitions and calls of their kind Lord, until inevitable destruction comes upon them.

If it should be said that, "though this similitude may fitly represent the case of sinners who pay no regard to the gospel, but run with greediness in a course of sin, yet the case of convinced sinners, who are concerned about themselves, and earnestly seeking deliverance, is different,"—it may be observed that there is no material difference, so as any way to affect the case under consideration. The sinner, however exercised and concerned he is about himself, and whatever pains he takes to better his case, and obtain deliverance, if still he does not actually accept of salvation, does refuse so to do from the fixed opposition of his heart to the salvation offered; which

opposition of heart is of the same nature and kind with that of the secure sinner, and is really as voluntary, and every way as inexcusable, and indeed is more apparent, and exercises itself in a stronger manner than that of the secure sinner; as the former actually resists more light and conviction of conscience than the latter.

Suppose two criminals under confinement and sentence of death, for some treasonable practices against their prince; the prince offers to pardon and restore them to his favor if they will heartily repent, ask his pardon, and submit to his government and laws, as excellent and good. One of them pays no regard to the proposal; but, unconcerned about what he has done, and what is coming upon him, follows his cups, and does not so much as seriously attend to the sad case he is in. The other thinks of the death that is before him with horror, and can neither eat nor sleep in peace; but, on the whole, cannot find in his heart to comply with the offer. The more he thinks of it, the more his heart rises against his prince. He cannot be willing to ask his pardon, nor does he desire to live under his government and laws. He tries every way he can think of to escape death, short of complying with these terms. He sends petitions every day and hour to his prince, hoping to gain his favor upon some other conditions; but the longer he tries the more he is convinced that he must perish, unless he heartily complies with the proposals made him, and the more clearly he sees and feels the opposition of his heart thereto. Now which of these traitors is, on the whole, the greatest criminal in the sight of the prince? Does the latter do any thing that tends to recommend him to the prince? And if after all he dies in consequence of his refusing to accept of the offered pardon and deliverance, is it any imputation on the goodness of the prince? or does it appear to be the less goodness in him because the traitor refused to take the advantage of it? Let common sense decide the question. And by this, the question before us will be decided.

The terms on which God offers pardon and salvation to sinners are not "to them impracticable, though they desire it." They are no more impracticable, and in no other sense, than are the terms on which pardon and safety are offered by the prince to the traitor, in the instance mentioned. If sinners perish under the gospel, it is through their own obstinate, continued, voluntary refusal to accept of, or truly desire and ask for, offered salvation. And shall this refusal of offered mercy, this direct and continued abuse of God's goodness, render it no goodness, and so change the nature of it as to turn it into cruelty? This is impossible.

If God puts men under advantages to be holy and happy, gives them all proper means, and sets before them all proper motives, and they fail of holiness and happiness by a neglect and abuse of these advantages, means, and motives, God's goodness is still most perfect, and it is not owing to any deficiency in this that they are not holy and happy.* Wisdom itself represents the matter in this light: "Because I have called, and ye refused, ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; for that they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord. They would none of my counsel; they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way," etc.

The doctor seems to think he has done much to set the wonderful goodness and mercy of God in a clear and striking light, by proving that there are promises to the unregenerate. He therefore makes the following, which he calls an important inference: "We see from hence the wonderful goodness and mercy of God, inasmuch as he has given us the strongest assurance of pardon and eternal life on such terms as, by his offered grace, we may all comply with, if we desire to do it." With the doctor's good leave, I will say, that the goodness and mercy of God appears equally wonderful, on supposition there are no promises made to the doings of the unregenerate. For even on this supposition, "he has given us the strongest assurances of pardon and eternal life, on such terms as we may comply with if we really desire it." I have, therefore, as good a right to this inference from my doctrine as the doctor has from his. Yea, I presume to say, a much better. In this sentence, the doctor supposes that the terms on which pardon and salvation are offered are so difficult, that a real desire to comply with them does not get over the difficulty, but there is yet need of God's "offered grace," to assist and help over that which is otherwise insuperable by the best desire and the

* If this needs any testimony besides that of the Holy Scripture and common sense, Dr. Mayhew's may be produced. "God may," says he, "properly be said to be good and merciful to all those for whose welfare he provides, according to their respective natures and capacities, however inferior. If these are upon the whole happy, or if those of a higher order might be so did they not abuse the divine goodness, God is certainly good to them." (Sermons on the Nature, etc., of the Divine Goodness, p. 29.) And again, (p. 67,) in order to show how the punishment of the finally impenitent is consistent with God's goodness, he says, "God certainly exercises great goodness and mercy towards such sinners in this world, not only in supplying their temporal wants, but in affording them such means of knowledge and eternal happiness as nothing but their own wilful blindness and perverseness can render ineffectual to that end. All are invited and persuaded, in the most gracious and pathetic terms, to accept of eternal life, through Him that gave himself a ransom for all."

utmost good will in the matter. Whereas, according to the doctrine he opposes, a real desire to comply is the compliance itself, and is the condition on which pardon and salvation are offered; there being no difficulty in coming up to the terms but what there is in having a real desire and hearty good will, or a being truly willing to accept of pardon and salvation. He who comes to this has no need of any "offered grace" to help him to comply with the terms of salvation, as the doctor supposes, but has already complied, and has pardon and salvation insured to him. If the doctor's scheme, then, shows the "wonderful goodness and mercy of God," that which he opposes does so much more abundantly.

But what does the doctor mean by his "offered grace," to help those to comply with the terms of salvation who "really desire to do it"? If there is a real desire to comply, the heart is really gained, and there is a real compliance of heart or will, and what more there is required as the condition of pardon and salvation, in which the heart or will has no concern, and so is not the compliance of the heart, but of something else, in order to which compliance we stand in need of God's "offered grace," even when the heart has really complied; I say, what this is, and how God's "offered grace" helps to it, the doctor has not told, and I am not able to conceive. Until the doctor shall explain this matter, I shall conclude that there is no "offered grace" to enable men to comply with the terms of salvation whose hearts do already really comply, and yet cannot comply until by this "offered grace" they come up to a compliance in which the heart is not concerned, it being something more than, and different from, a hearty compliance. I believe that no compliance with the terms of salvation is required but a hearty compliance; and, if men are by God's grace assisted to such a compliance, they have all the assistance they want in the case, in order to obtain pardon, and, therefore, that God does not offer any other assistance in order to a compliance.

But let us attend a minute longer to this extraordinary passage of the doctor's. He says the wonderful goodness and mercy of God appears, "inasmuch as he has given us the strongest assurances of pardon and eternal life, on such terms as, by his offered grace, we may all comply with, *if we really desire to do it*." But what if we do not really desire to do it? Will this in the least sully the goodness of God in making the offer on such low terms? The doctor supposes, in his very putting the case, it will not. What, then, if none of mankind will really desire to comply, or, in other words, really and heartily comply with the terms on which pardon and salvation are

offered, until they are regenerated, and have a new heart given them? Is not the goodness of God to be vindicated, and does it not appear to be wonderful in offering pardon and eternal life to every one who is heartily willing and desirous to have them, however far mankind may be from a heart to comply with this condition?

Dr. Mayhew himself is as clear and full in this as any one can be, as appears, not only from passages already quoted, but the following words of his, in the sermons under consideration: "He [God] has provided and revealed a way of salvation for sinful, guilty, and lost creatures, through the mediation, the sufferings, and death of his own dear Son, and saith, Whosoever will, let him come, etc. God exerciseth patience and forbearance towards his sinful creatures, thereby giving them time and opportunity for repentance, and working out their salvation. Now, if you should neglect this method of deliverance from condemnation, and think everlasting life not worth your striving after, you will not only remain under the guilt of your other sins, but will be justly chargeable also with despising the goodness of God, even the riches of his goodness, forbearance, and long suffering."

If the language of the gospel to sinners is, Whosoever *will*, let him come, "and all are invited and persuaded, in the most gracious and pathetic terms, to accept of eternal life," and sinners' refusal to comply with these offers and slighting them is a "despising the goodness of God, even the riches of his goodness" exercised and manifested herein, then unregenerate sinners have these offers, and God is herein good to them, and their refusal to comply is a despising the riches of his goodness. Is it not strange that the doctor should express himself so clearly and fully on this head, from time to time, and so perfectly agreeable to the doctrine he opposes, and yet so confuse and bewilder himself and his readers, as in the passage just now considered, and in many others? Or, are we the only persons confused and bewildered? "Let the unbiased judge."

Obj. 2. It is objected, that if there are no promises of success to the endeavors and doings of the unregenerate, in seeking the salvation of their souls,* then there is little or no encourage-

* The reader is desired to observe and bear in mind, that when the unregenerate sinner is spoken of as seeking salvation, using means and endeavors in order thereto, or even hoping for it, expressions of this kind are to be understood in a sense consistent with his really at heart opposing, hating, and rejecting the salvation which the gospel offers. This is not properly the object of his desires and hopes; and, therefore, not what he seeks after, and endeavors to obtain. He does not heartily ask for, or desire, the pardon which the gospel offers; nor that deliverance from sin, and that holiness and happiness in which the salvation revealed in the gospel consists; so cannot be truly said to

ment to sinners to take pains in this matter, in attending on the means of grace; but it tends greatly to discourage, and lead them to neglect, all means and endeavors for their own salvation, if not to indulge themselves in all manner of licentiousness and known sin.

Dr. Mayhew indeed allows, that, upon supposition, there is no certain connection between the endeavors and strivings of the unregenerate and salvation; yet they are obliged in all reason to strive, and do their best. He observes that men will think it worth while to take the utmost pains in the concerns of a worldly nature, when there is an uncertainty with respect to the success of their endeavors; but that the reason and motive to strive for salvation are unspeakably greater, though there be an equal uncertainty of obtaining. However, he insists upon it, that if unregenerate persons are told that there is no connection between any of their endeavors and obtaining eternal life, this has a direct and manifest tendency to dishearten them and damp their endeavors, and must needs prove a great discouragement to them.

Answer. Whether there is any just ground for this objection, the reader must judge, when he has attended to the following particulars: —

1. It does not appear from fact and experience that what is supposed and asserted in the objection is true, but the contrary. There can be no instances produced of persons who have been engaged in a diligent attendance on the means of grace and salvation, and have been discouraged and left off from this consideration, that there was no certain connection between what they did and their salvation. Persons who appear to be in any good degree in earnest in this matter, are not wont to be discouraged in the least by this doctrine. They who profess to neglect the concerns of their souls because there is no promise to the pains they should take, would not be persuaded to be in earnest by all the promises that can be imagined; and this appears not to be the true reason of their sitting still, or going on in a way of allowed sin.

And if it be inquired, Who are generally the most in earnest in the use of means? it will doubtless be found that they are

endeavor after or hope for this. But the object of his desires, hopes, and endeavors is something else; even that deliverance from misery or natural evil, and that happiness or natural good, which are naturally and even necessarily the objects of men's desires, from an aversion to misery and love of happiness, which is essential to a moral agent, and is consistent with the greatest love to sin, and most perfect opposition of heart to that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. These expressions are used in compliance with the common way of speaking in this matter, and not because it is the language of Scripture.

those who believe there are no promises made to the doings of the unregenerate; while they who embrace the contrary notion are generally in a great degree careless and negligent; either wholly putting off the concerns of their eternal interest for the present, or contenting themselves with that which is very consistent with great slothfulness in religion, the prevalence of a worldly spirit, and a greedy pursuit of the things of time and sense. To be sure, it does not appear that a belief that the endeavors of the unregenerate are connected with salvation has any such influence on persons to excite and encourage them earnestly to attend on the means of grace and salvation as that they who believe this to be true evidently distinguish themselves from others in their endeavors; and where this doctrine is preached up most strenuously and constantly, it does not appear to have any sensible effect to rouse and engage sinners to zeal and earnestness in this matter. Such congregations do not appear to be more engaged and painful in the things of religion than others, where the contrary doctrine is preached. But if there is any visible difference in this respect, it is directly the reverse of this; and wherever there have been the most remarkable visible instances of sinners being awakened to a suitable concern about their souls, and a great and constant engagedness in attending on means, it has been under the preaching, which is in the whole tenor of it inconsistent with the notion of there being promises made to the doings of unregenerate sinners; and all their concern and earnest endeavors have taken place, and continue, under a firm belief of the contrary doctrine.

Now, if it appears from fact and experience that the doctrine which asserts that there are no promises to the doings of the unregenerate is not matter of discouragement to any in constantly and earnestly attending on means, and that the opposite doctrine does not influence to stir men up and put them forward in taking pains in this matter, but rather has a contrary influence, have we not reason to conclude that the objection is groundless, however well supported by good reason the objector may think it to be?

It appears from fact, that sinners under the gospel more commonly neglect the proper means of grace and salvation, live in security and sloth, and so finally miscarry from presumption than from despair, or for want of greater encouragement and hope; and when they do despair, so as in any degree to discourage them, and prevent their engaged, resolute, painful endeavors, this is never grounded on their supposing that there are no promises to their doings, but upon some delusion. What secure sinners, under the gospel, who are neglecting the

means of salvation, want, in order to their being engaged in this matter, is to have their fears excited, and not their hope. Their hope is generally high enough, and too high in all reason; and is, therefore, presumption. They stand in need of having their fears excited by a sight of the dangerous and awful state they are in; and when they have any degree of a just sense of this, they will still have all the hope that is consistent with a just fear and concern about themselves, even on supposition there are no promises made to their endeavors. They, therefore, who make this objection, seem not only to have overlooked matter of fact, but not to attend to human nature in its natural operations in a state of unregeneracy; and, therefore, attempt to argue, not only against all experience, but in direct opposition to reason and the nature of things.

But I proceed to observe, —

2. The doctrine that the doings of the unregenerate are connected with salvation, as it is preached up by those who hold it, is so far from containing in it more encouragement to them than the opposite doctrine, that it tends greatly to discourage sinners, who are in any good measure acquainted with themselves, and even to throw them into despair.

According to this doctrine, a sinner must distinguish himself from others by his doings, as the proper and only ground of his obtaining mercy; and in order to this, his exercises and endeavors must be in some sense obedience to God, so in some degree good and acceptable, or at least not wholly unpleasing to God; so that by this he shall become a more suitable object of mercy, and recommend himself to God's favor; and in order to this, the sinner must really, heartily, and earnestly desire salvation, even the salvation which the gospel offers, and must strive for it with the utmost earnestness, without intermission; must begin in season,* and persevere in it to the end of life.† And he who does not do all this, is so far from being in the way to salvation, that he will

* Dr. Mayhew tells his hearers that they may neglect striving for salvation till it shall be too late ever to obtain, even though life should be continued. "Do not, I beseech you, delay, for human life is precarious; and although your own should be prolonged, yet if you go on to provoke God by your sins, he may, perhaps, give you over to a reprobate mind; so that you will only live to fill up the measure of your sins. To-day, then, if you will hear his voice." According to this, no one sinner who has lived any time in the world can be sure it is not too late for him; yea, all such have reason to fear it is so, and that especially if they find their hearts to be yet hard, which every unregenerate sinner does, if he has any true acquaintance with it.

† According to Dr. Mayhew no striving is successful, or connected with salvation, but that in which men persevere in to the end of life. He says, "The striving here enjoined must be supposed to intend striving with perseverance,

certainly be lost; and, therefore, can have no reasonable hope of mercy.

Now, it is easy to show that such a representation of the case tends to discourage the sinner who has any degree of

not for a month, a year, or any definite given time, but as long as it shall please God to continue us in the world."

Upon this it may be observed that, if any are regenerated before they die, or in this life, God does not grant them this favor and give them a new heart, in fulfilment of any promise to their doings or strivings, or because there is any connection between their strivings and this gift of a new heart; for if no striving entitles to any promise but that which continues to the end of life, even to the last breath, then if a new heart and an interest in Christ is given before the end of life, it is given not as a promised mercy, and, therefore, not out of respect to any endeavors of the sinner, or because they have any connection with it. Therefore, they who are regenerated, and become true Christians in this life, do not obtain it by their striving, as having any connection with it, but they become so by the unpromised sovereign mercy of God. If, therefore, all who are saved are regenerated, or obtain a new heart, and become real, true Christians in this life, then they are all brought into a state of salvation, have a sure title to life, and are interested in all the promises of the gospel, not by virtue of their unregenerate strivings, but before they obtain any title to God's favor by these, because it is before they have persevered therein to the end of life.

The doctor's promises to the doings of the unregenerate, and their certain connection with salvation, do at length then turn out to be promises that are never fulfilled, or rather, no promises at all, and a connection which is of no avail, but is consistent with their being eternally lost. For notwithstanding these promises and this connection, they must go out of the world unregenerate, or in their sins, because they are not entitled to the promises, and the connection does not take place while they are in this life, as the condition is not fulfilled till the last breath; and if they go out of the world unregenerate, they must be damned, unless they are regenerated and become true Christians in the other world, or after death.

Therefore, if any hope to obtain a new heart, and become real Christians in this life, they can, according to the doctor's plan, have no encouragement to strive under the notion of doing that with which such a favor is connected, but must seek it as an unpromised, sovereign mercy; and they only can be encouraged by the doctor's promises who are willing to wait for a new heart till after they are dead; that is, till it is eternally too late to obtain it, according to the divine constitution.

The doctor having observed that all persons though unregenerate, who desire salvation and strive in order thereto, shall be saved, unless they cease thus to desire and strive, adds the following words: "Not, to be sure, without being born of God, but they shall be renewed in the spirit of their minds, and consequently enter into life." If they are born of God in this life, or while "it shall please God to continue them in this world," they receive this favor before they have fulfilled the condition of it, and, therefore, not as what they have a title to by promise; for they have not yet fulfilled the condition, which is perseverence in striving to the end of life. If they shall be born of God, and renewed in the spirit of their minds after they are gone out of this world, and so out of the body, this is a new doctrine which has hitherto been thought contrary to Scripture. In one word, —

The doctor supposes that all who have a new heart given them receive it as a favor promised to their seeking and striving. But in order to their being entitled to this promise, they must seek and strive as long as they are in the world. Therefore, according to him, none are regenerated and made new creatures in this world, but this work is in all cases put off till after men are dead; so there never was a regenerate person or real Christian in this life.

just views of himself, and to land him in despair. The sinner who is brought to any true sight of himself, and belief and sense of eternal things, finds he has an exceeding hard heart, a stony heart; as this is never removed till men are regenerated. He finds that he is in no measure affected with the things of God and religion, as it is reasonable he should be, and takes pains and strives in no degree answerable to the importance of the matter. He will, therefore, naturally look upon himself not to be an earnest striver for salvation, but rather a stupid, hardened creature, who, though he finds himself more concerned about his soul than some others appear to be, and constantly attends on the means of grace, yet cannot view himself as having begun to strive in earnest; and will, therefore, naturally be afraid it is too late for him. And, in this case, calling upon him earnestly and perseveringly to strive for salvation as the only condition on which he may hope to be saved, will tend to drive him to despair; for the more concerned he is, the more deficiencies he sees in his endeavors, and the less they appear to him; so that he will naturally conclude he never shall be one of those strivers. He also finds that he has no real true desires of the salvation which is offered in the gospel, but is wholly without all good desires and inclinations, or any thing which should be acceptable or pleasing to God; and that there is no foundation in him for this until his heart is changed. He will, therefore, despair of ever attaining to this in an unregenerate state; and, consequently, if he is made to believe that none can obtain a new heart but those who have these good desires, he will, of course, despair of ever obtaining it. In a word, he sees that he never has, and never shall, do any good thing, by which he should distinguish himself from others, but naturally looks upon himself as one of the greatest sinners; as his own sins are more in his view, and more attended to by him, than those of others. He therefore despairs of thus distinguishing himself from others; of doing or obtaining any thing which should recommend him to God's favor, by becoming better or less sinful than others. So the doctrine that teaches him he must thus distinguish himself or perish, will be so far from comforting and encouraging him, that it tends only to discourage him; it will be like singing songs to a heavy heart, and if believed, will certainly deprive him of all hope. The only doctrine that can give support and hope to such a sinner, and encourage him to attend on means, is, "that God has mercy on whom he will have mercy," and therefore waits not to have sinners distinguish and recommend themselves to him as more

suitable objects of his mercy than others, before he will grant them mercy; but in showing mercy acts as being infinitely above all obligations to any, and as having no regard to worthiness, or less unworthiness, as what recommends one to his favor rather than another. This being the case, the greatest sinner, he who looks on himself the furthest from righteousness of any, and himself to be the most guilty and unworthy, may hope in the use of means, and this is his only support.

If a person is but in a small degree concerned about his own salvation, and is in no measure convinced how sinful and depraved his heart is, and how entirely destitute of all good, he may be flattered and encouraged, under the notion of doing something by which he shall distinguish himself, so as to become a more suitable object of mercy than others, and which shall entitle him to God's favor. But to what is he encouraged? Why, to think more highly of himself and his doings than there is any reason for, and to go on in a dull, lazy way, while he flatters himself he is sufficiently in earnest, and is doing something very great and good. This is to flatter him to his own ruin, to keep him easy and secure in a great degree, or to quash any beginning of genuine conviction and concern, and promote that pride and self-confidence, which is inconsistent with the sinner's attending on means with any good degree of solicitude and earnestness; and must be slain, in order to his coming to good.

If these things are so, I think it will follow, —

3. That though there are no promises made to the endeavors and doings of the unregenerate, yet sinners have all proper encouragement to a diligent use of means; yea, all that the nature of the case will admit of.

If the doctrine, that there are promises to the doings of the unregenerate, does not, in fact, or according to the reason of things, tend to encourage and excite sinners to a proper and diligent use of means, but really has directly the contrary tendency, then the opposite doctrine affords all proper and possible encouragement thereto, and is the only plan on which sinners may be addressed, considering their state and disposition, so as to excite them earnestly to use means with all proper degrees of encouragement and hope, and so as shall tend to answer the proper end of means.

But what is said in the next section may serve further to clear up and confirm this.

SECTION X.

Of the End and Design of Means; and the true Ground of Encouragement for Men to be in the diligent Use of them, in order to their Salvation.

It may still remain a doubt with some, whether there is really any ground of encouragement for men, especially the unregenerate, to use means to obtain salvation; or, if there be any, what it is. And as this is an important point, and a careful attention to it may serve to throw some further light upon this subject, and yet more fully obviate the objection last considered, the reader is invited to an attentive and candid perusal of what may be said in answer to the following questions: —

Ques. 1. What are the means of grace and salvation? and what is meant by using these means?

Ques. 2. Why are means to be used? and what end does this answer? And what motive and encouragement is there to this?

Ques. 3. What obligations are men under to use means?

Ques. 1. What are the means of grace and salvation? and what is meant by using these means?

Answer. The means of grace and salvation may be considered as including every thing which is adapted and tends to communicate light and truth, respecting the things of a moral nature, to the mind of man; or to lead his mind to attend to truth, and to excite those ideas which are necessary or proper, in order to right exercises.

The grand medium of grace and salvation, and, strictly speaking, the sole medium, is *truth*. It is in the view of this that the mind exercises itself properly, and has true enjoyment. This is the food and life of the mind. Was there no truth, there could be no virtue or real happiness. As sin and misery consist summarily in the darkness of the mind, and its alienation from, and opposition to, light and truth, so all true holiness and proper mental enjoyment consist in those exercises which are implied and involved in a proper view and sense of truth; the truth, I mean, which relates to God's moral government and kingdom.

But then, all those things, those institutions and exercises, which tend to instruct mankind in the knowledge of truth; to excite the attention, to convey truth to the mind, and hold it up in its view; all these, I say, are in a more remote sense

the means of grace and salvation. Such are all those things, those circumstances and events in the natural and moral world, which are adapted to instruct mankind. Such, in a special manner, is divine revelation, and all those institutions and appointments therein, to be attended on by men. Such are reading the Bible, public and private instructions, religious conversation, serious meditation on divine things, etc., and particularly prayer, which is the most solemn way of meditating on divine truth, as it is done as in the presence of God, and in a solemn address to him, and has a special and peculiar tendency to awaken, instruct, and affect the mind.

Using these means intends two things, viz., —

1. Taking methods with men to set truth before them and instruct them, and awaken their attention. Thus God is using means with men in his providence, which is every way calculated to give instruction to a sinful world; but more especially by giving the revelation which is contained in the Bible, and ordering it to be published and preached to the world. And according to divine institution, men are using means with others for their salvation, by public and private instructions.

2. Persons themselves attending on these means. This is supposed in the use of means just mentioned; for if there were none to attend on means, there would be no such thing as using means with any for their instruction; for the end of instruction cannot be answered where there is no attention to the instruction given — so no pains taken to get instruction. He who cannot have the attention of those with whom he attempts to use means, fails of answering the proper end of means entirely; and what he does is as much in vain, as to any benefit to the persons with whom he is concerned, as if they were stocks or stones. So that God's using means with men for their instruction and salvation, and directing men to use means with others, supposes the propriety and importance of attending on these means. There would have been no wisdom or propriety in making a revelation if there were none to attend to it, and use all proper means to understand it, and get the instruction there given. To what purpose would it be to preach a sermon, or write a book, in order to instruct men, if none were to hear or read? And what reason or propriety would there be in it? The propriety and reasonableness of taking any pains or method to instruct men, or using any means with them to this end, supposes it proper and reasonable that they should give all that attention, and take all those pains, which are necessary in order to be under the best advantage to get the instruction given. Now this is the sum of

what is meant by being in the use of means.* To use or attend the means of grace, is to make use of all the means of instruction in the things that relate to God's moral kingdom; to go into that conduct and practice, and do all those things which tend to lead us into the knowledge of the truths of divine revelation, and to keep up the attention of the mind to them, and carefully to avoid whatsoever has a contrary tendency.

Ques. 2. Why are means to be used? and what end does this answer? Or of what advantage is it to use means? What motive and encouragement is there to this?

It has been observed that the end of using or attending on the means of grace is to lead the mind to the knowledge of that truth which it was before ignorant of, or to renew the attention to truth already known, and to fix the mind upon it. The question now is, what end this instruction answers; of what advantage is it to have the truth set before the mind, and to have the attention of the mind fixed upon it?

Answer. The benefit, advantage, and importance of this to men is just as great as that of an external divine revelation. For divine revelation is of service to men no further than it is attended to and understood. The world is as well without it as with it, if no instruction is given; but this instruction comes only by attending to the things revealed, in the use of means. If, therefore, the revelation which God has made in the Bible is adapted to be of any benefit to mankind, with respect to their eternal salvation, it is of equal benefit to mankind to attend to this revelation in the diligent use of all proper means, that hereby they may get and retain the instruction given therein; for without this it will certainly be in vain to them. A revelation not understood is of no more advantage than no revelation at all. Therefore, means are to be used in order to obtain the knowledge of the truths contained in the Bible, and to fix and impress them on the mind.

In order to the salvation of men, it is absolutely necessary that they should have the ideas and knowledge of those things which relate to this salvation, and in which it consists. He

* They who insist upon it that there is no reason why men should be in the use of any means for their instruction and salvation, and yet are using means with others for their instruction by conversation, preaching, or writing, seem to be guilty of an inconsistence. For, if it is unreasonable to use any means for instruction, it is unreasonable to attend to what they write or speak in order to this; consequently, it is unreasonable for them to write or speak. If the instruction they give is worthy to be attended to, then the Bible is worthy to be attended to, and it is reasonable and proper to take all possible pains to understand it; and this implies the constant and diligent use of all means of grace and salvation.

who has no idea in his mind of any thing, is not capable of any exercise of heart, or of any mental enjoyment. No man is capable of any exercise about that of which he has no idea or knowledge. It is impossible that a man should repent and believe the gospel so long as he has no knowledge of those truths, in the view of which repentance and faith are exercised. Therefore, if repentance and faith in Christ are necessary in order to salvation, a knowledge of those things contained in divine revelation, without which there can be no such exercise, is equally necessary. But this knowledge can be obtained only in the use of means.

There are but two possible ways in which the knowledge of the truths which are necessary to be known in order to salvation can be obtained, viz., by immediate revelation or inspiration; or by an external mediate one, or by means. The latter is the way which God has taken to set these truths before the mind; therefore, the knowledge of them is not to be obtained in any way but in the use of means.*

In proportion, therefore, as men feel the importance and worth of salvation, will they be engaged in the diligent attendance on the means of grace, as necessary in order thereto, and so the only way in which they may hope to obtain it.

It is to be observed that I am now speaking of that knowledge which the mind is capable of, independent of any degree of right taste or disposition of the heart, or which the mind may have without discerning and relishing the beauty of divine things, and is what is commonly meant by speculative or doctrinal knowledge. This knowledge is to be obtained only in the use of means, and is necessary in order to repentance, or any right exercise of heart; though no degree of it does imply, or is certainly connected with, any truly virtuous or holy exercise.

The unregenerate are certainly capable of great degrees of this knowledge, which may much impress and affect their

* If the thief on the cross, and Saul the persecutor, should be thought by any to be converted and saved without attending on means, they are desired to consider that the former was surrounded with means of instruction, and it is apparent that he was all attention; and what was this but to attend on means? And the same is true of the latter. His immediate instructor was Jesus Christ, and no sinner was ever more attentive than he. And neither of them could have been converted and saved had they not attended. It may here be observed that as persons' circumstances may be vastly different, and the attention of one may be to a much greater degree than of another, so one may gain that instruction in a short time which others do not obtain in a much longer, who yet are in the use of means. God may order things so, that a person may get that instruction in a few hours or minutes which it takes another years to obtain; yet the instruction which the former obtains is no more without attention and the use of means than that of the latter, and therefore is no argument against the necessity of the use of means in order to get instruction.

minds. (See James xi. 19.) They may have a clear view and affecting sense (which is indeed, strictly speaking, something more than mere speculation) of the truths of Christianity, and particularly of their own state as sinners. They are capable of every thing of this kind but what depends upon, consists in, or results from, a sight and discerning of the true beauty or moral excellency of divine things. This is indeed a kind of knowledge which is peculiar to the regenerate, the foundation of which is laid in their having a new heart. The former is necessary in order to the latter, as it is supposed and implied in it; for there can be no discerning of the beauty of those objects of which the mind has no speculative idea.

If it should be asked, What good all this instruction and knowledge will do the unregenerate who are under the dominion of a hard and impenitent heart, and will continue so until a new heart is given in regeneration? If this knowledge will be of no service to them, and really do them no good, and they are yet as far from salvation as ever, then there is no encouragement for them to attend on the means of grace, in order to obtain it, and keep up a view and sense of the truths of Christianity in their minds.

I answer: It is certain the unregenerate do not exercise any true virtue in their attendance on the means of grace, however engaged and diligent they are, and whatever pains they take in this matter. And there is no connection between the instruction or knowledge they obtain hereby and holiness. Yea, the impenitent sinner who continues obstinately to reject and oppose the salvation offered in the gospel, does, in some respects, yea, on the whole, becomes not less, but more vicious and guilty in God's sight, the more instruction and knowledge he gets in attendance on the means of grace. The more clearly he sees his own wretched case as a sinner, and the dreadful consequence of dying in his sins, and the clearer conviction he has of his need of a Savior, and of the truths of the gospel in general, the greater is the crime of his impenitence and continuing to reject the salvation offered in the gospel. The awakened, convinced sinner, who has taken a great deal of pains in the use of means, and has hereby got a great degree of instruction and knowledge, and yet continues impenitent, is in this respect much more guilty and vile, and a greater criminal in God's sight, than if he had never attained to this conviction and knowledge, for now he is guilty of the abuse of, and opposition to, all this light and knowledge, which he could not be while he had it not. Yea, his impenitence, and all his sins, are so aggravated by the light and conviction he obtains, that whatever particular ways of known sin he has

forsaken, and how many soever external duties he attends upon, yet, on the whole, he is undoubtedly a greater sinner than he was when he lived in security and the neglect of the means of grace. So that the impenitent, unregenerate sinner does not grow better, but rather grows worse, by all the instruction and knowledge he gets in the use of means. And awakened, convinced sinners, with whom most means are used, and who are most attentive to the concerns of their souls, and most in earnest in the use of means, are commonly, if not always, really more guilty and odious in God's sight than they who are secure and at ease in their sins.

Their greater sinfulness does not, indeed, consist in their concern about themselves, in a sense of the sad, dangerous state they are in, and in their earnestly desiring deliverance and safety, or in the pains they take in order hereto; but in their continuing to hate God and his law, and to oppose and reject the Savior, even under all their concern, exercises, and endeavors, and with all the light and conviction they have.

Our Savior represents the light which men have as that which does, in a peculiar manner, and above every thing else, aggravate the sin and condemnation of those who rebel against it. He says, "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men have loved darkness rather than light." (John iii. 19.) And he says of those to whom he preached, who continued to hate and reject both him and the Father, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin," (John xv. 22, 24;) i. e., their sin would have been little or nothing compared with what it is now. And he speaks of the inhabitants of those cities where most of his mighty works were done, to whom he most frequently preached, and who attended most on his ministry, and yet continued impenitent, as much more guilty, and liable to a more awful condemnation, than if they had never enjoyed these advantages, nor had this light and instruction. (Matt. xi. 20–24.)

None will deny, I trust, that a living under the gospel and enjoying the means of grace is the occasion of aggravating the sin and condemnation of those who persevere in their opposition to Jesus Christ. The gospel proves to them a "savor of death unto death." Consequently, the more light and conviction men have, the more their attention is awakened to the things of the gospel, and the more means they attend upon and are used with them, while they continue obstinately to oppose light and truth and reject the offers of the gospel, the more guilty and vile, and the greater criminals, are they in God's sight.

If these things are so, then the sinners who continue im-

penitent under the greatest convictions of conscience, and the most concern about their souls and salvation, and are consequently taking the most pains, and using unwearied endeavors, are usually the greatest sinners, really more vicious, more guilty and vile, than they were when in a state of security, and lived, in a great measure, in the neglect of the means of grace. And if they live and die impenitent, their condemnation will be more intolerable than if they had never had that conviction and knowledge which by their attention to the gospel they have obtained. So that the good the sinner gets, by a constant attendance on the means of grace, while he continues impenitent, is not a becoming in any degree virtuous or holy hereby, or, on the whole, less vicious and criminal in God's sight.

However, there is yet a reason why the sinner should diligently attend all means of instruction and knowledge, and sufficient encouragement hereto. For, —

1. Without this instruction and knowledge, which is to be obtained by those only who are using the proper means of it, the sinner cannot be saved, as has been shown. This knowledge being absolutely necessary in order to salvation, he who is without it has a fatal bar in the way of his salvation; and, so far as this is obtained, this bar or impediment is removed out of the way; and so he is in a more likely way to be saved than those who are in security and ignorance. For, surely, he who has obtained one thing which is necessary in order to salvation is in a more likely way to be saved than he who has not obtained it, nor is in the way of it, all other circumstances being equal, however uncertain it may be that either shall be saved. In order to salvation, several things are necessary. He cannot be saved who does not believe, and he cannot believe who has not heard and attended to the report of the gospel, so has no right speculative notions about the objects of faith; and he cannot hear and understand who has not the advantage of divine revelation. (See Rom. x. 14, 17.) Now, he who enjoys divine revelation, and attends to it with the utmost concern and diligence, so is in the way to get right speculative notions of the objects of faith, and obtain all that is implied in hearing, is more likely to be saved than he who either does not live under the gospel, or, if he does, never attends to it, and uses no proper means to understand it. I say, the former is more likely to be saved than the latter, because he has more of those things which are necessary in order to this than the latter. If hearing, which is the same with a diligent attendance on the means of grace, is necessary in order to faith and salvation, then they who are concerned about the salvation of their souls will be proportionably concerned and

engaged to hear and get instruction, as the only way in which they may hope to be saved.

It may be also further observed, —

2. As that instruction and knowledge which is to be had only by hearing, in a diligent and earnest attendance on the means of grace, is necessary in order to the exercise of repentance and faith, and so in order to salvation, so the way in which this knowledge is to be obtained is the only way in which sinners may hope for a new heart, or to obtain regenerating grace.

As he who has no doctrinal acquaintance with the truths contained in God's word is not in a capacity to exercise any Christian grace or virtue, whatever foundation there might be for this in the renovation of his mind by regeneration, no one has reason to expect that his heart will be thus renewed by the Spirit of God while he is in this case. God can, doubtless, as easily change the heart of the most ignorant, deluded Mahometan, or heathen, yea, the most blind, stupid Hottentot in the world, as that of the most awakened, enlightened sinner under the gospel. But if he should do so by the regenerating influences of his Spirit, there could be no right and proper exercises of Christian virtue and holiness; because such a one is without any right speculative knowledge of those truths, in the view of which alone Christian holiness is exercised. And giving a new heart, or a right taste and temper of mind, would not remove this darkness. This only prepares the mind to discern and relish the beauty and sweetness of divine things, when set before it in the use of means, but does not give any new speculative ideas or knowledge. Therefore, we have no reason to think God ever does so.

And as the case is in a great degree the same with those under the gospel who have never attended to it in earnest, they have no reason to expect to become new creatures by God's regenerating influences, so long as they are in this situation. But in order to this they must first be made to attend to the gospel with that concern and earnestness which is necessary in order to their learning the character of the just God and Savior, and understand their own state and circumstances as sinners, in a manner in which no careless neglecters of the means of grace ever do; for, until they come to this, grace or the new creature could have no opportunity to exert itself properly, or according to its nature, but must lie dormant and inactive, so answer no good end; therefore, not to be expected before or in any other way. For God does not give life before there is any provision for the support of it, or any materials by which it may subsist and exert itself according

to its own proper nature. Truth may be said to be the food on which the new creature lives, and is absolutely necessary to the least motion of life, or exercise of holiness in the heart. Therefore, the mind that has no speculative view and conviction of those truths, in the sight and sense of which, especially, Christian holiness is exercised, but embraces the contrary errors, or is in total ignorance of them, is not furnished or provided for the exercise and support of the divine life. And none have any reason to expect it will be implanted, or a new heart given while the man is in such a state.

When God created man, he did not first form him while the earth was in its chaotic state, when it was without form, and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; he did not create him with all his bodily senses and appetites before there were any objects towards which they might exercise themselves in a manner proper to man's nature, and so as to support and promote animal life, and afford proper enjoyment and happiness. He did not form an eye before there was any light, or objects to be beheld. He did not produce animal life, dependent on food for its constant support and exercise, and an appetite for that food, before any materials were made to become proper food, suited to the appetite, and to support and nourish life. He did not form man before he had provided any place for his subsisting and exercising himself in a manner proper and suited to his nature. No, he first created an external world, a proper dwelling place for man, furnished with materials suited to the senses, appetites, and life of such a creature, that there might be a foundation and opportunity for proper exercises and enjoyments, as soon as he should be created. And we hesitate not to say, that this was agreeable to wisdom; and that the contrary would not be so.

So in the new creation, God will not form the new creature where there is no proper provision, where there are no materials for the life and support of the new man, so no opportunity to act, and to act in a manner proper and suitable to his nature. But proper materials for this new life must first be provided. The mind must be properly stored with speculative ideas of divine things, and the judgment convinced of the truth, in order to which the man must be all attention to these things; in a sense of their high importance to him, as his whole, his eternal interest turns upon them. When things are thus prepared, a new heart may be given with propriety and wisdom, as the new creature will now have opportunity to act in a way answerable to its nature, and so to the glory of God.

Christ would not raise Lazarus to life so long as the stone lay on the cave. It was proper the stone which would hinder

his coming forth, were he alive, should be first taken away. In this case, to neglect to take away the stone would have been an effectual bar in the way of his resurrection; and the most likely method that could be taken to have him raised from the dead was to take it away. Ignorance of and inattention to the truths of divine revelation may be compared to this stone. The only likely way for the sinner to become the subject of a spiritual resurrection, is to have this taken away, by becoming all attention to the things contained in God's word. And the more instruction the sinner has, the more fully and clearly he is convinced of those truths which do most nearly concern him; and the more constantly and earnestly he attends to divine truth by hearing, reading, meditation, prayer, etc., and the more his mind is impressed and affected with it, as the minds of the unregenerate may be, the more hope there is in his case; the more likely it is that he shall become a new creature, and believe to the saving of his soul.

This view of the matter serves to show what is the advantage of knowledge to the unregenerate sinner, even the knowledge which no openly vicious or careless sinner ever obtains; and the reasonableness and importance of using means with such by constant public and private instruction, and of their earnestly attending on all proper means of instruction; and consequently the motive and encouragement there is to this. Moreover,

3. Fact and experience serve to strengthen the foregoing observations and reasoning, and show the advantage there is in attending on the means of grace, and hold forth the proper encouragement thereto. For it appears from experience that this is the most, the only likely way to obtain regenerating grace and salvation. None, I suppose, will dispute whether more have been converted and saved of those who have attended on the means of grace, than of those who have not, in proportion to their numbers. All will grant that many were saved who attended on the preaching of John the Baptist, Christ, and his apostles; many more, according to the number of those who attended, than of those who did not enjoy or attend these means. Our Savior indeed says that publicans and harlots went into the kingdom of God before, or rather than, the chief priests and elders of the Jews. But this is so far from being an objection against what has been just observed, that it serves to confirm it. For publicans and harlots attended much more on Christ's preaching, and much better understood the things relating to the kingdom of God, than they. The former attended so constantly, and were so much in his company, that it was made an objection against

him, and he was obliged often to vindicate his conduct with respect to them.

It therefore appears from fact and experience that they are in the most likely way to be saved who attend on the means of grace. And, when the matter is attended to, the reason of this may easily be seen, as has been shown above. We therefore now see what advantage there is in attendance on means, and what is the proper motive and encouragement thereto. When any one attends to his eternal interest, and feels the infinite importance of it to him, and at the same time sees the undone, wretched state he is in as a sinner, he will, with all his might, pursue that method which appears most likely to obtain deliverance from the evil he fears and promote this interest. Let the only way be pointed out to him in which he may have hope, and he will want no farther motive and encouragement to attend to it with resolution and earnestness. This will prove, in all such cases, a sufficient motive and encouragement, and will never fail effectually to influence the person who is sensible his all lies at stake, and enters into the infinite importance of the matter to him. If, therefore, any sit still in the neglect of the means of grace, it is not owing to any deficiency in the encouragement to attend upon them; but to stupidity with regard to their own case, and their eternal interest. And if this encouragement is not effectual, no imaginable, or even possible, encouragement would be so. If any should say, that promises to the sinner's endeavors and persevering attendance on means would raise the encouragement much higher, for then there would be no discouragement, but an absolute certainty of succeeding in this way, the following particulars may perhaps serve to discover their mistake: —

I. If there were such promises made, the sinner would be so far from being absolutely certain of salvation in a way of attendance on means, that the probability, in his view, and his encouragement, would not be at all increased hereby; and that for two reasons, —

1. The sinner could never come to any certainty that he had fulfilled the condition to which the promise is made, or that he is in a likely way to fulfil it. (1.) Because he could never be certain that he had come up to that precise degree of earnest striving and diligent attendance on means to which the promise is made.* If there are any promises made to the

* Indeed, he may be certain, as long as he lives, that he has not yet fulfilled the condition; because he has not attained to perseverance so long as he has one breath more to draw, however great the degree of his endeavors now are. The sinner, therefore, can have no encouragement from such a promise of being

doings of the unregenerate, they are made not to any certain kind of exercises and endeavors, so that the lowest degree of this kind of seeking entitles to the promise, but to a certain degree of this kind, which is not, neither can be, precisely pointed out and distinguished from some lower degree to which the promise is not made, so that the sinner can ever be certain that he has attained to that degree. And however near he comes to it, if he, after all, finally falls short in the least degree, he is as far from salvation, in this way, as if he had done nothing. This, therefore, would tend to perplex rather than encourage the sinner. Yea, the sinner who has the clearest view of the viciousness of his own heart, and the greatest sense of the reality and importance of eternal things, will be farthest from imagining that he has attained to that degree of earnestness of endeavor to which the promise is made; and will be most ready to conclude against himself, as being a stupid, indolent, sottish wretch, and despair of ever obtaining salvation in this way. But,

(2.) If the sinner could be certain that he has attained to that degree of earnestness of endeavor which will entitle him to the promise, if he perseveres in it, yet he can have no certainty of persevering, so no certainty of salvation. As his perseverance depends wholly on himself, his own will and resolution, and so he has nothing to rely upon but himself for it, it is the most uncertain thing in the world that he shall persevere. He can have confidence in nothing, in this case, but his own deceitful heart, which is indeed only the confidence and presumption of a fool; for "he that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." (Pr. xxviii. 26.) If he is sufficiently in earnest and painful in his endeavors for some time, yet if, after all that, he is in any degree remiss and negligent one day, or but one hour, all is lost, and he has got all to begin again; for he has failed of perseverance. And how does he know that it is not now eternally too late! So that his salvation on this footing is the most uncertain, precarious thing in the world, or rather may most reasonably be despaired of. He who knows his own heart, so far as he who is under proper, genuine convictions does, can take no encouragement from this quarter. This is suited only to flatter and bolster up the unreasonably self-confident and foolhardy. Therefore,

2. Such promises, were there any, would only tend to encourage men in a self-confidence which is as opposite to the whole tenor of divine revelation and the peculiar genius and

delivered from the miserable state of unregeneracy, and becoming a true Christian, in this life, as has been before observed. And this is the same with no encouragement at all.

glory of the gospel, as darkness is to light; so that the more the sinner has of it, the further he is from Christ, and the more blind to the way of salvation by him. The preaching up such promises, therefore, will tend to fix persons in their self-confidence and delusion who have no good degree of genuine conviction of their sinful, miserable state, and to fasten them down in ease and security; so to pervert the benefit of the means of grace and frustrate the great end and design of them, which is to give light and instruction to the sinner. But to those who are in any measure convinced of their true state, so know how little dependence there is on themselves, how vile and sottish their hearts are, this doctrine will give no encouragement, but will have directly the contrary influence on them, if they can be made to believe it, as has been before shown.

Ques. III. What obligations are men under to use means?

Answer. They seem to be under the same obligations to this, as they are to repent and believe the gospel. If God commands all men every where to repent, then he requires of them all that is implied in, or is necessary in order to repentance. He, therefore, requires of them to understand those truths which are necessary to be known in order to repentance; consequently requires all that attention to the things contained in divine revelation which is necessary in order to understand those truths, a right speculative knowledge of which is implied in repentance. But this implies a diligent use of the means of grace, as has been shown. A neglect of any of those things which are implied in, or necessary in order to repentance, is a neglect of and opposition to the command to repent; so a counteracting and violating our obligations to repent. But he is guilty of this who neglects the means of grace. It has been shown that there is a certain degree of speculative knowledge necessary in order to exercise repentance, which they never have who live in the neglect of all means of grace; therefore, the command to repent is a command to attend all those means necessary in order to attain that knowledge. If men are under any obligation to attend to the command to repent and be converted, or to obey this command, they are under obligation to all that which is implied in this, or necessary on their parts in order to it; therefore, are under obligation to hear and attend to the truths contained in God's word, with the utmost concern and diligence.

The preaching the gospel, therefore, which is the same with a testifying to all men repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, is a call unto all to hearken and attend, as this is implied in repentance and faith. But to

hearken and attend, implies the whole that is intended by the use of means. Therefore, if any preacher of the gospel doubts whether he has any warrant to call upon and exhort sinners to attend the means of grace, he appears not well to understand what he is about; for he is really doing this while he is calling upon and exhorting them to repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ; for how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? *

And it may be here observed, that this is the scriptural way of calling upon men to attend means, viz., to call on them to repent and believe the gospel; and they who so far attend to this call as to feel the infinite importance to themselves that they should comply with it, will, of course, and of their own accord, go into a diligent use of the means. Many public teachers, therefore, seem to make a great mistake here. Instead of calling upon all to repent and believe the gospel, as the only condition of God's favor and eternal life, the most they do, with relation to unregenerate sinners, is to exhort and urge them to these doings, which are short of repentance. They teach them to use means in such a manner as rather tends to defeat the proper end of means, and so as that they become a means of blinding their eyes, rather than of instruction; it tends to lead them to rest in means, and make a Savior of them; to quiet and heal them short of repentance and a saving application to Jesus Christ.

Objection. Whatever obligations sinners are under to attend the means of grace, yet if they attend, they still sin in all they do while they continue impenitent; yea, they are constantly growing worse and more guilty, the more pains they take and as light and conviction increase. What obligations do they then fulfil? and is not this sufficient matter of discouragement?

Ans. 1. They do not properly fulfil their obligations, if they stop short of true repentance or real holiness; for nothing short of this is true obedience to God's law. Nevertheless, a neglect of the means is an instance of the violation of the obligation they are under, which they are not guilty of who do attend with concern and engagedness, however guilty and vile they may be in other respects; which guilt and vileness may

* They are indeed already attending on means, while he is preaching the gospel to them. This is supposed; for if they give no attention to what he says, why does he speak? Every word he says is, in effect, a call to attend, and his manifesting his intention to preach in any future time is a call upon them to attend; for if their attending is not reasonable and important, there is no reason in his preaching; so his intention to do it is foolish and absurd, consequently his doing it now is so. In this view, then, he who undertakes to preach the gospel, and yet holds that sinners are not to be called upon to attend means, is guilty of a glaring absurdity.

be greatly aggravated by their attendance on means. If a man forbear to kill his neighbor, certainly he does not violate the obligations he is under not to kill, as he does who takes away his neighbor's life, however far he may be from any true love to his neighbor, or obedience to any of God's commands; and though he may, on the whole, be more guilty than the murderer.

If a father calls after and commands his two sons, who are running from him, with a design to quit his family and government, as what they perfectly hate, immediately to return back and submit themselves to his authority, if they ought to obey their father's command, then they are under obligation to stop and attend to what he has to say; for this is implied in what he requires, and necessary in order to it. Therefore, if one turn about and attend to what his father has to say to him, while the other stops his ears, and runs on till he is out of hearing, the former does not violate the obligation to stop and hearken, which the latter does, though if he continues to hate his father, and refuses to return and submit to his government, he cannot be said to obey his father's command, and may, by the light and conviction laid before him by his father, in consequence of his stopping and attending, be more guilty in refusing to submit to him than the other who has been out of hearing.

And if any bystander who sees them running off should tell them to stop and hear what their father says, he would herein act a friendly part both to them and their father, and perfectly coincide with his command to them to return and submit themselves to him. Indeed, if he should inculcate this upon them so as to leave their father's command to return out of view, dwelling on this as if it was the only thing that they had to do, or as what would on the whole recommend them to their father, and interest them in his favor, or render them less displeasing to him, though, after all, they persisted in their refusal to return and submit to him,—I say, if he should treat the matter so, it would be so far from vindicating the father's authority, and coinciding with his command, that he might justly look upon it as taking part with his rebellious sons, setting up against him, and flattering them to their own ruin.

Ans. 2. However sinful and abominable in God's sight the impenitent are in all they do, even in attendance on the means of grace, their sinfulness does not consist merely in this; it does not consist in their concern about their eternal interest, in their dread of misery, and desire to escape it and obtain happiness, nor in their using means in order to this, in

reading, hearing, and praying; but in their impenitency, in the opposition of their hearts to holiness and the only way of salvation, and in those things which are the attendants and consequents of this; or in the want of their opposites, with which all their exercises are attended, and, therefore, very criminal. But this can be no reason why they should neglect the proper means of salvation. If "the ploughing of the wicked is sin," shall they therefore not plough? Shall they not desire food for themselves and their families, and take the most likely method to obtain it? Their sin does not consist merely in their ploughing, so that it would be a less sin not to plough than to do it, but in the wrong views and exercises of mind with which they plough, and in the want of right ones.

And if by attending, praying, reading, and hearing, the impenitent sinner grows more criminal and vile, as his light and conviction increases, this is not properly owing to use of means, but to the rooted viciousness of the heart. The attendance on means is indeed the occasion of it, as by this greater light and conviction takes place in the mind, and the wickedness of the heart takes occasion by this light to exert itself with a higher hand and more obstinately.

Ans. 3. The sinner's growing no better, but really worse, more guilty and vile, the more light he has, and the greater advantages he enjoys while he continues impenitent, is really no matter of discouragement from attending means in order to get light and instruction. For in the gospel there is no more encouragement given to a less sinner than to a greater, that he shall find mercy rather than the other, while both continue impenitent, and opposers of the way of salvation therein revealed. No one sinner has any reason to hope that he shall be saved rather than another, because he has not been, or is not now, so great a sinner as others, while he is impenitent, and at heart an enemy to the gospel. Never did a sinner find acceptance with God on account of the comparative smallness of his sins, or his reformations, which were short of a hearty compliance with the gospel. We indeed read of one who took his encouragement that God would accept and favor him from his imagining himself not so criminal and vile as others. But what was the consequence? He was rejected, while one who took his encouragement to hope for God's mercy quite from another quarter, and which was consistent with his viewing himself as the chief of sinners, found favor. (Luke xviii. 9–14.) The gospel offers salvation to the greatest sinners; they are as welcome as any other; they are as acceptable to God, and he is as ready to bestow salvation upon them as if their sins were not so many and great, if they will

heartily embrace offered mercy, submit to, and trust in, a Mediator. In this respect there is as much encouragement to the most guilty and vile, as to any whatsoever.

And as to obtaining a new heart by regenerating grace, they who are the chief of sinners have as much encouragement to hope for this, in the use of means, as they whose sins are less aggravated, and not so many or great. It does not appear, from Scripture, that God chooses out the least sinners to be the objects of this mercy, or that he withholds it from any merely because they are so guilty and hateful in his sight; or that he waits till men who have been great sinners are so reformed as to become, all things considered, less vile and guilty. And there is not any thing in the Bible that should lead us to think that God bestows his regenerating grace on the least sinners more commonly than on those who are greater. But we find much there to teach us that if he ever does this, it is not because they are less sinners than others, but for some other reason.

If sinners were to take their only encouragement to hope for salvation, in the use of means, from their being less sinners than others, or not so bad as they once were, this would tend to take all encouragement from those who are under genuine convictions and have any true view of their own sinfulness, and leave them in absolute despair. For all such, as they have a more clear and full sight of their own sins than they can have of others, are naturally led to view themselves as the greatest sinners. And as by attendance on means, they get more and more acquainted with their own hearts; their own sinfulness increases in their view; they are so far from looking on themselves as less sinners than they were, that they naturally view themselves in a contrary light.

The only proper way, therefore, to encourage the sinner who is under any great degree of genuine conviction of sin, and concern about his eternal interest, to attend on means with hope, is not to preach up promises to his doings, and lead him to expect hereby to become less sinful, but to teach him the true end and design of means. He will then know that the great wickedness of his heart, exercised in all he does, and his appearing to himself to grow worse rather than better, which is commonly the chief ground of discouragement to such, is really no reason why he should neglect means, but rather an encouragement constantly to attend. For this sight and conviction of his own sinfulness, which is necessary in order to salvation, is kept up in his mind and increased only by attending on means. In this view, his own experience serves to show the advantage of using means, and is matter of encouragement and hope.

THE

TRUE STATE AND CHARACTER

OF

THE UNREGENERATE,

STRIPPED OF ALL MISREPRESENTATION AND DISGUISE:

BEING A

REPLY TO MR. MILLS'S

INQUIRY CONCERNING THE STATE OF THE UNREGENERATE UNDER THE GOSPEL:

CONTAINING REMARKS ON

MR. HOPKINS'S SECTION ON THE USE OF MEANS.

PREFACE.

There are many who have, by some means or other, such an aversion to all controversy and disputes about matters of religion, and look on them to be so dangerous and hurtful that they take the utmost care to keep at the greatest distance from every thing of this kind, and are constantly cautioning others against it, and refusing to enter into any debate with them; unless, perhaps, they will dispute a little against disputing. These cannot hear of a public controversy, or, as many of them call it, *a paper war*, about any thing that relates to religion, without great disgust, and expressing their sorrow that there should be any such thing; especially between the ministers of the gospel. And doubtless many have expressed their displeasure and grief at the controversy which has taken place between Mr. Mills and me, and have determined, for their part, not to concern themselves with it so much as to read what is written.

Many of these are so modest as to say they do not pretend to be competent judges of such controverted points, which great and good men are not able to agree in and settle. Besides, they have no time to spend upon these thorny disputes, they think they can be better employed in reading plain, practical divinity.

If any of these should venture so near so large a book of controversy as is the ensuing, as to look into the preface, they may be desired to consider the following things: —

Whether they are not neglecting that attention, and free

and earnest inquiry after the truth, without which they are like to live and die in a great degree of ignorance. And whether they are not depriving themselves of the benefit of one special means and advantage of improving in knowledge. And whether, at bottom, this neglect does not proceed from a degree of self-sufficiency, and from an indifference concerning matters of high importance to be known.

Whether it is not the most likely, yea, the only way they can take to know of how much importance any controverted point is to them, and to be able to judge on which side the truth lies, carefully to read the whole controversy.

If any persons are not competent judges in these things, is it not their own fault, for which they have no reasonable excuse? And must they not be able to judge for themselves concerning every truth, in order that it may be of any benefit to them? In this view, is there any real modesty and humility in their neglecting to take all possible pains to be able to judge for themselves in matters in which none can judge for them, merely because others who have had a reputation for learning and wisdom have differed concerning them; especially, since these things, which are hid from the wise and prudent, are sometimes revealed unto babes?

Finally, whether the truth would not greatly suffer, and gross ignorance universally prevail, if every one should take the same care to avoid all disputes as they do?

When we consider of what advantage controversy has already been to truth, and what a tendency it has, in the issue to establish it, and make it shine more clearly than if no such controversy had arisen, we shall have reason to conclude it is God's design that every important truth shall be in this way canvassed, and disputed out, as the best way to have it established to the greatest advantage; and that this is one end he designs to answer by suffering heresies to arise, and almost every truth, in its turn, to be called in question and opposed. In this view, disputes are so far from being hurtful, and matter of grief, that when they rise high, and become very common, and gain the attention of all, there is ground of encouragement and comfort.

It is to be lamented, indeed, that in many instances controversy has been so poorly managed, by which truth has appeared very much to suffer; but even in this case, the debate has often been not wholly useless.

The author is sorry that the side he has taken in the controversy before us has not a more able advocate to defend it, as he doubts not it is capable of a much better defence than he has made. And he is particularly sensible there are many defects in his style, which will be discerned by the reader of a critical taste, and will call for his candor.

The author thinks he has a claim, on the part of justice, to the attention of all those who have read Mr. Mills, especially of those who, in reading him, have concluded the author has run into very great and hurtful errors. If they have so peremptorily prejudged as not to be willing to hear the accused speak in his own vindication, he thinks he shall have reason to complain; not to mention the injury such men hereby do to themselves, and to the cause of truth.

It is needless to tell with what very good views and designs, and from what excellent, noble motives the author has undertaken this reply, as this would be no great evidence in his favor, if any; and it is of very little importance to the reader; his chief concern being to know whether the author has well vindicated the cause he has undertaken, whatever were his motives.

If the author and the reader shall be found on the right side of the question, and to have taken the pains of writing and reading the ensuing reply, from love to Christ and zeal in his cause, they will be richly rewarded for all their labor, and numbered among those who follow Christ when he rides forth conquering and to conquer, and will soon have a happy meeting, and stand before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palms in their hands, where perfect agreement in sentiment and the most exalted friendship and union of hearts shall reign forever, to the praise of the rich, sovereign grace and honor of the divine, infinitely worthy Redeemer. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen.

March 23, 1769.

THE

TRUE STATE AND CHARACTER

OF THE UNREGENERATE.

PART I.

IN WHICH THE FOLLOWING QUESTION IS CONSIDERED, VIZ., WHETHER THE UNREGENERATE, WHEN UNDER GENUINE, THOROUGH AWAKENINGS AND CONVICTIONS, ARE MORE GUILTY AND VILE IN GOD'S SIGHT, THAN THEY WERE IN A STATE OF IGNORANCE AND SECURITY?

SECTION I.

The Question particularly stated.

Mr. Mills has expressed what he says I have asserted, and what he undertakes to oppose and confute, in the following proposition:—

"That on every rising degree of internal light, awakening, conviction, and amendment of life, found in any of the unregenerate, while such, they are undoubtedly (on the whole) more vile, odious, and abominable in God's sight than they would have been had they continued at ease, going on in their sins, under the same external means of light."

I would observe, in the first place, that this proposition seems hardly intelligible. If by "every rising degree of amendment of life," he means every degree of reformation of life, I see not the connection this has with "every rising degree of internal light, awakening, and conviction," as it stands in the proposition. Amendment of life may take place, and often does, without any internal light and conviction at all. It often does so by the alteration of a person's external circumstances; by the removal of the temptation which led to external wickedness; or by a persuasion that such a conduct is

hurtful to his worldly interest. And there may be a degree of awakening and conviction of conscience without producing any reformation of life. And where amendment of life does take place in consequence of internal light, the former does not always keep pace exactly with the latter. A small degree of internal light and conviction of conscience will often produce a full amendment of life; and, after this is effected, and the person is quite reformed in his external conduct, this internal light and conviction may yet increase, and rise immensely higher than that degree which was sufficient for the amendment of life.

Therefore, I say, in the next place, the proposition is not a true representation of what I have advanced in my section on means. When I speak of the light and conviction of conscience which the awakened sinner has preparatory to regeneration and conversion, I no where confine it to the lowest degree of this kind which ever takes place in the mind of a sinner, nor to that degree which is barely sufficient for his external reformation. This is not the conviction of which I speak; I speak of an immensely higher and greater degree of knowledge and conviction than that which is sufficient for this. Mr. Mills himself takes special notice of this, in the following words, which stand not six lines from the proposition I am considering: "Nor are the convictions of awakened sinners here spoken of under any restriction or limitation, but whatever be the degree, 'though under the greatest convictions of conscience, and the most concern about their souls.' The author indeed begins with what he calls instruction, explained by speculative knowledge, and then adds what he terms more than speculation, and finally rises to all that conviction that the unregenerate are capable of, while such." And he expresses this yet more fully in the following words: "The author having raised the unregenerate to the highest degree of an awakened sense of divine things, that their state, as such, is capable of; 'every thing,' as himself expresses it, 'short of discerning the true beauty or moral excellency of divine things,' he proposes this query, viz., 'If it should be asked, what good *all* this instruction and knowledge will do the unregenerate?' etc. Here it is to be noted, that it is fully conceded by the author, that the unregenerate, under consideration, have *all* degrees of light and conviction of divine truth, that can, by a common work of the Spirit, agree to an unregenerate state." Here he appears to be sensible enough that the sinners under consideration have all degrees of light and conviction, and takes pains to show that such are the sinners which I have in view in what I say. This is, indeed, very easily proved. Had this been in his mind, when he was about

forming the proposition I am considering, it ought to have prevented its ever coming into existence, as it now stands.

In the paragraph from which Mr. M. quotes the most, as containing the proposition he has formed, I represent the sinner, of whom I am speaking, as having a much higher degree of knowledge and conviction than is necessary barely to produce an external reformation; and as sinning against the light of his conscience in rejecting the gospel, whatever may be his external reformations. That the reader may have it before his eyes, I will transcribe my words: "The more clearly he sees his own wretched case as a sinner, and the dreadful consequence of dying in his sins, and the clearer conviction he has of his need of a Savior, and of the truths of the gospel in general, the greater is the crime of his impenitence and continuing to reject the salvation offered in the gospel. The awakened, convinced sinner, who has taken a great deal of pains in the use of means, and has hereby got a great degree of instruction and knowledge, and yet continues impenitent, is in this respect much more guilty and vile, and a greater criminal in God's sight, than if he had never attained to this conviction and knowledge; for now he is guilty of the abuse of, and opposition to, all this light and knowledge, which he could not be while he had it not."

Had Mr. M. well attended to this, he must have been sensible that the light and conviction of which I speak, as *rendering* the impenitent sinner more guilty than when in a state of ignorance and security, is not the lowest degree of light and conviction, nor that degree which is only sufficient in some measure to reform a person's life; and that I affirm nothing particularly of such a low degree of conviction of conscience which may produce some degree of reformation, or even wholly reform a person's external conduct; and, therefore, that the proposition is not contained in any thing I say, but is a gross misrepresentation.

To set this matter in a yet clearer light, if possible, I would observe, that a person may be brought to an amendment of life by what is called, by some at least, internal light and conviction of conscience, and yet not have that light and conviction of which I speak. A person may have only some imaginary, confused notions of a future state of punishment, and be alarmed and affrighted by apprehensions of his exposedness to fall into hell, etc., so as hereby to be led to leave off his vicious courses, and yet have no just speculative notions of God, sin, or hell. In this case, the reformation is not produced by true light and conviction of conscience. To be sure, this is not the conviction of which I am speaking. Another person

may reform his life only under a conviction that the course of wickedness in which he has lived leads to hell, without any further conviction with respect to his sin, his lost state, his duty, etc., and by such reformation may make his conscience easy. Another, under a yet further conviction that something must be done to obtain God's favor, not only reforms all known sins, but betakes himself to what he thinks duty, and by this gets ease to his conscience, not imagining but that his reformations and doings will make up for his past sins, and render him accceptable to God. Whether such a one, who from a course of sensuality and debauchery, or any other open wickedness in which he lived, and had little or no thought of God or a future state, but only sought the gratification of his reigning passions and appetites, becomes serious and regular in his behavior, and goes into a course of strict external religion with a view to make a righteousness of his own, and get to heaven this way; I say, whether such a one, by thus turning from one course of wickedness to another, does, on the whole, become less guilty and vile in God's sight, may be a question worthy to be attended to.* But be this as it will, it is not a question that I am at present immediately concerned with, as nothing which I have said about sinners under awakenings, and convictions of conscience, has any respect to such a one, or to any of the instances which I have now mentioned.

In a word, whatever internal light and conviction of conscience is necessary to bring a person to reform his external conduct, and goes no further than this, and rises no higher, this is not the light and conviction of which I am speaking. A person under the influence of such light and conviction, by thus reforming, may be said, in a sense, to act up to the light he has, i. e., the light of his conscience, by obeying it and coming up to the dictates of it. As I have said nothing about such an instance, in which reformation rises in a just propor-

* Mr. M. has himself answered this question, in representing the Pharisee, who went up to the temple to pray, as "one of the vilest sinners on earth." And I desire the reader to consider whether in doing this he has not implicitly decided the question in dispute between us, against himself. His vileness consisted chiefly in his being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish his own righteousness; he did not submit himself unto the righteousness of God, but opposed it with his whole heart. (See Rom. x. 3.) He did this in ignorance and unbelief, and perfectly agreeable to his own judgment and conscience. Every unregenerate sinner, under the greatest awakenings and convictions, does with his whole heart refuse to submit to the righteousness of God, and opposes it, and desires and attempts to establish his own righteousness, and that in direct opposition to the dictates of his judgment and conscience. The difference between these two, therefore, seems to lie against the latter, if sinning against the light of conscience is more vile than living in the same way of sinning ignorantly.

tion to the light of conscience, and keeps pace with it, it appears that it is not true that I have asserted, "that on every rising degree of internal light, awakening, conviction, and amendment of life, the unregenerate are undoubtedly, on the whole, more vile," etc. I have a right, therefore, to disown the proposition Mr. M. has formed for me as containing what I have not asserted; in which what I have said is kept quite out of sight, and entirely misrepresented.

Let it be also observed, that in this proposition, which is said to contain the sum of what I have advanced on this head, that which I mentioned as the ground of the greater guilt and criminalness of the awakened, convinced sinner, and that in which it really consists, is not mentioned, but kept entirely out of view; which renders it a very partial, unfair state of the case, and tends to give the reader, especially one who has never carefully attended to this matter, quite a wrong view of the thing in dispute. I place his greater guilt not in his awakenings and internal light, nor in his amendment of life, but in his continuing entirely obstinate and impenitent under all this light and conviction, and in his opposing and rejecting with his whole heart the free offers of pardon and salvation by Jesus Christ, in direct opposition to the clear dictates of his judgment and conscience. This, therefore, ought to have been expressed in a proposition formed with a professed design to express what I had asserted on this head. As it now stands, there is nothing expressed as the ground of their being more vile, odious, and abominable in God's sight, but "rising degrees of internal light, awakening, conviction, and amendment of life," which surely is not a fair state of the case.

Mr. M. makes the reformation of the convinced sinner to keep pace with his light and conviction of conscience. This he does in the proposition in which he attempts to express what I have asserted, and every where else through his whole book. He makes him to be one who reforms all known evils, and comes up to all known duties. By this he grossly misrepresents me, and the whole matter in dispute, and raises a dust to blind the eyes of the inattentive. It is easy to see that light and conviction does not aggravate the sins of him who immediately complies with it, and comes up to all the dictates of it perfectly. The sinner I speak of is supposed not to comply with the light and conviction he has, but to rebel against it, (which is certainly the case of all the unregenerate under true convictions,) and in this I placed his greater sinfulness. Mr. M., in his proposition, leaves this wholly out; so, in effect, leaves all out that I had asserted, and introduces a character about which I had not said one word, and so makes

me assert what I never did assert, nor mean to assert. I pretend not to charge Mr. M. with thus stating my sentiment in a partial, unfair, and wrong light, knowingly and upon design. All I am concerned to make out is, that this is in fact the case, which I trust manifestly appears to the impartial reader; and I leave it to him to assign what reason he pleases why Mr. M. has stated the matter as he has done. I am willing he himself should be believed when he says he has, "to the best of his understanding, fairly adjusted, stated, and summed up the sense of the author."

It may be observed that Mr. M. has not only here carefully kept the character which I give of the unregenerate sinner under true awakenings and convictions of conscience out of view, but has done it through his whole performance; and when he has occasion to quote me where I speak of "the sinner's continuing obstinately to reject and oppose the salvation offered in the gospel," lest the reader should be led by these expressions to look on the sinner in too bad a light, he carefully observes that I "mean no more than merely his continuing unregenerate," and nothing but what is consistent with his reforming every known sin; as if these expressions of mine naturally carried in them something more and worse than what is implied in being unregenerate, and, therefore, cannot be properly applied to the sinner on this account only. And it is apparent to me, and I doubt not will be so to every discerning reader, that if Mr. M. had not viewed the unregenerate sinner in a better and more innocent light than I do, (and, I trust, than the Scripture represents him,) and had he not looked on such as little or nothing to blame for unbelief and rejecting the gospel, the book he has written would never have seen the light. But of this matter I shall treat more largely hereafter.

Having shown that Mr. M.'s proposition is so far from "comprising the plain sense of the author," that it contains what he never asserted, and is a very gross misrepresentation of the sentiment he has espoused, and a very unfair state of the case, I will express it in my own words, and so as to give what I think is the "plain sense" of what I have said in my section on means, and which I yet think is the truth, and may be defended.

The unregenerate sinner, who is under genuine and thorough awakenings and convictions of conscience respecting his own state and circumstances and the truths of the gospel, particularly respecting this truth, that salvation is freely offered to him through a Mediator, which he is obliged by the strongest ties of duty and interest immediately to accept and embrace, being at the same time wholly without any excuse for his neglect in

not embracing it, and for the opposition of his heart to Christ, of which he is conscious, and who yet continues, under all this light, and contrary to the plain dictates and pressing, painful convictions of his own conscience, obstinately to oppose and reject Jesus Christ; such a one is, on the account of this his impenitence and obstinacy under this clear light and conviction of conscience, more guilty, vile, and odious in God's sight than he was before he had this light and conviction, and was in a state of security and ignorance, whatever alteration or reformation has taken place in him in other respects.

To prevent misunderstanding, it is needful to observe here, that in this proposition, and in all that I have said on this head in my section on means, nothing is affirmed of a sinner who has lost his convictions which he was under for a while, and has returned in a great degree to security and ease and to the allowed commission of the gross external wickedness which he had forsaken under the influence of the light and conviction which he had, or to that which is more gross and vile; I say, nothing is affirmed of such a one, whether he is now more or less guilty and vile than he was when under conviction, and when externally reformed. All that is affirmed is, that the sinner under the awakenings and convictions described, is more guilty than he was in a state of ignorance and security antecedent to such convictions, of which he never was the subject before. Mr. M. has made this mistake, and not distinguished between these two cases, as I shall have occasion to observe in the sequel. The sinner I describe may be much more guilty and vile under awakenings and convictions than he was before, and yet may be more guilty still, on the whole, by opposing and suppressing his convictions, and, as it were, doing violence to his conscience by designedly taking those measures and going into those ways of gross outward wickedness which by degrees wear off the conviction which gave him uneasiness. This is a case to which nothing I have said has any respect.

I would not be here understood, however, to intimate that the awakened, convinced sinner does not always oppose his convictions, though not always in the same sense and degree as just now mentioned. Convictions may be opposed two ways, and in two senses. They are truly opposed when the truths of which the sinner is convinced are disagreeable to his heart, and he refuses cordially to submit to them, and comply with them. In this sense unregenerate sinners always resist all their convictions, and oppose them with their whole hearts, however desirous they may be to have their convictions continue, and whatever pains they may take in the use of means

to maintain and cherish them, because they believe that they are necessary in order to escape hell, and be saved, and that it is most dangerous to lose their convictions, and return to ease and security. In this sense they may "nourish their convictions," agreeably to Mr. M.'s phrase, and yet oppose all the truths they are convinced of with their whole hearts, and remain most obstinate enemies to Christ, and the way of salvation by him. But sinners may also resist convictions, and often do by trying to get rid of them, and taking measures with a design to wear them off from their minds; and many times they in this way still their consciences, get ease, and return to their former courses, or to courses still worse. Of such nothing is affirmed or denied in the proposition in dispute between Mr. M. and me.

Let it also be noted here, that if two persons have equal degrees of light and conviction of conscience, and one reforms his external conduct, and attends on means under the influence of the conviction he has, and the other goes on in his allowed external wickedness in neglect of all means, and this ever was or can be the case, nothing is said of such a case in the proposition. Indeed, nothing is said of different persons, whether one is more guilty and vile than another, but what is affirmed is of the *same* person who is now awakened from a state of ease and security, and has that light and conviction of conscience which he never had before, and which is inconsistent with a state of security and open wickednesss.

It will be observed, that in this proposition it is asserted that this is true in all cases, however vicious and guilty the person was while ignorant and stupid, and in a state of security and carnal ease; yet by continuing impenitent under the awakenings and convictions mentioned, he becomes a greater criminal, is guilty of more aggravated wickedness than he was before, whatever particular ways of sinning he has forsaken in which he before lived.

This, I am sensible, will be thought by many to be carrying the matter to a great length, and even too far. If it had been only said that many, if not most unregenerate sinners, who have not been guilty of any enormous crimes and uncommon wickedness in their lives, do become more guilty when their consciences are thoroughly awakened and convinced than they were in a state of security, they perhaps think this is true, and may be easily proved. But to carry the matter so far, even to every instance without exception, they think is not safe, and perhaps is not true; and if it is true it is a matter of no great importance, and it may be difficult to prove it; and it will give those who are disposed to oppose the real truth in this

case an advantage against it, and an opportunity greatly to prejudice others against it who would probably have fallen in with it had it not been asserted in such universal terms.

It is certain that Mr. M. has taken all the advantage he could of this, and, as has been shown, more than he could fairly do, by misrepresenting the matter and carrying it further than I had done. He has not failed to keep this in view every where, as if it was the only point of controversy between him and me; whereas this is not true, for he, through his whole book, as much opposes the notion of sinners in general growing worse under awakenings and convictions of conscience, or that this is true in any instance, as he does that this is the case in every instance; and he has said nothing to prove the latter not true, which is not equally against the former. Therefore, if I should now give up this point, that sinners, under genuine, thorough convictions, are in all cases more criminal and vile in God's sight than they were in a state of ignorance and security, however criminal and vile they were then, and only assert that this is the case with unregenerate sinners in general who have lived pretty regular lives in a state of security, Mr. M. would have as real a controversy with me then as he has now, as his whole book is as much against the latter as the former. This, I trust, will fully appear before I have done.

But as I yet think this proposition is true, as I have now stated it, and may be made evident beyond all doubt to those who will be impartial, and will thoroughly consider the matter, I shall attempt to prove it, and leave it to the reader to judge for himself. But if, after all, any should think it is not proved beyond all controversy that the unregenerate in the case proposed are in all instances more vile, etc., though it be quite evident that this is true of sinners in general, and that it is of no importance that the proposition should be affirmed without any exception, let it be remembered that though I think the former to be both an evident and important truth, yet the latter is much more important. And if Mr. M. had not opposed the latter as much as the former, perhaps I should not have thought it worth while to make any reply.

But before I proceed to this argument it will be necessary to consider what is the true state and character of the unregenerate sinner under awakenings and under the most clear convictions of conscience. This will therefore be attended to in the next section.

SECTION II.

The true State and Character of the unregenerate Sinner under Awakenings and Convictions considered and stated, in Opposition to the Character which Mr. Mills gives of such.

The unregenerate sinner is an enemy to God. The whole bent and all the exercises of his heart are in opposition to God's true character, and no influences on his mind, whether by the Spirit of God or any thing else, antecedent to regeneration, or any change whatsoever, do in the least degree remove this opposition and enmity; for he is still under the dominion of sin, having not the least degree of right disposition and exercise of true love to God and man. And whatever awakenings of conscience and convictions of the truth take place in the sinner's mind, and however distressed and anxious he is about his case, and whatever alteration there is in his conduct produced by fear or hope, still he is as real and as great an enemy to the divine character, to the law of God, to Jesus Christ and the gospel, as ever. Whatever are the influences of the Spirit of God on the mind of an unregenerate sinner, in awakenings and convictions of conscience, they make no alteration as to the prevailing temper and inclination of the heart. No new disposition and principles of heart are given, nor are the natural, corrupt principles of the heart in the least altered for the better, so as to be more friendly, or less opposite to God. Therefore, all the exertions and exercises of the heart, under the greatest degree of this influence, by which the conscience is enlightened and awakened, are no more friendly to God, but as corrupt and as opposite to him as ever.

This must be so; for the corrupt principles of the heart, exercised and acted out, will always be the same, whatever light and conviction is in the judgment and conscience. The corrupt tree will bring forth corrupt fruit, and that which is born of the flesh is and will be flesh. Every exercise of an entire enemy to God will be of the nature of enmity against him. And there is no other way to suppress and put an end to those corrupt, sinful exercises, but either to change his heart, or to put an end to all his exercises by casting him into a deep sleep, by turning him into a beast, tree, or rock, or by annihilation. Many have talked of the unregenerate sinner's forsaking sin and doing his duty upon mere natural principles; but what do they mean? What natural principles are there but corrupt principles? If they say natural conscience

is a natural principle, and not corrupt, especially when enlightened by the Spirit of God, I answer, natural conscience, so far as it is distinguished from the heart, is no principle of action at all. The heart is the source and seat of all moral exercise and action; natural conscience, therefore, as distinguished from this, is neither sinful nor virtuous. If they shall say, fear and hope are natural principles, I grant they are common to angels and men, saints and sinners; but, in the unregenerate, have no more real goodness in them than the same principles in the devils themselves. Fear and hope are as much concerned in the worst of exercises and actions, and have as much influence in them, as in the best. And the exercises of fear and hope are just as corrupt and sinful as is the heart in which they are exercised. If they say that self-love is a natural principle from which the unregenerate do avoid sin, and in many cases perform their duty, I answer, if by self-love is meant only a desire and love of happiness in general, and aversion to misery or evil, this is in itself neither more nor less sinful or virtuous, but may be considered as the principle of all exercises and actions, both good and bad, and has as much concern and influence in the worst as in the best. But if by a principle of self-love is meant selfishness, or a person's selfish regard and respect to himself, his own private, separate interest and happiness, without any regard to any other being, always seeking and pursuing that which appears to him for his own good, being wholly influenced by this and nothing else in all his exercises and conduct, this is itself sinful, and is the principle and source of all the sin in the universe, being directly opposite to true benevolence, which is the sum of all that is truly good; this is, in its own nature, enmity to being in general, and is that by which man becomes an enemy to God and man. So far, therefore, as men act from this principle, they sin, and they are sinful in proportion to the strength and vigor with which this principle is exerted. If a person is wholly under the government of this selfishness, loving and regarding himself supremely, and having no respect and regard to God or man only from selfish ends, and as the fruit and exercise of this selfishness; I say, if a person is wholly under the dominion of this selfishness, as all the unregenerate are, all his actions are wrong and sinful in whatever way he seeks his own happiness, whether in a worldly interest, in pursuing the profits, honors, or pleasures of this world, or in the happiness of the future state, earnestly pursuing it, in crossing his sensual appetites, and in the painful exercise of what he calls devotion and religion. Opposition and enmity to God and his law, and so to Christ and the

gospel, may be as really exercised in the latter way as the former, and in as high a degree, yea, much higher and more immediately and directly against God. But of this more particularly hereafter.

It hence appears, that whatever influence there is on the natural principles of the soul by the Spirit of God, in awakenings, conviction of conscience, etc., this does not at all abate the power of wickedness in the heart. Self-love, or selfishness, into whatever channel it is turned, whether it is exercised about present or future good, in fears of evil or hopes of good, in this world or the world to come, and earnest attempts to obtain the good and escape the evil,—I say, this selfishness is still of the same nature, and it is in direct opposition to all true goodness. The greatest awakenings and convictions of conscience, and every thing that takes place in consequence of this in the minds of the unregenerate, do not in any degree abate the exercise of this grand principle of all sin and rebellion in the universe, so do not make the heart in any degree better, but may be the occasion of turning the selfish, rebellious heart more directly and in a much stronger degree of exercise against God, and perhaps always has this effect. But this is to be considered in the next section.

I particularly observe this, to show the mistake which some make in this matter. Because awakenings and convictions of conscience are effected by the Spirit of God, they think that something good or less sinful in the heart must be the effect of this work of the Spirit. There is no ground for such a consequence. There is nothing done in the enlightening and conviction of the consciences of the unregenerate, and awakening them to attend to the truth, which will not be done in a much higher degree, though not just in the same way, in the minds of the wicked at the day of judgment and forever afterwards. But who will say the wicked then, under all their convictions, fears, and horrors, will not be as rebellious, impenitent, and hardened as the secure sinner is, who neither knows nor fears any of these things?

If any should say, "There is this grand difference between an awakened, convinced sinner in this world, and the convictions and horrors of the wicked at the day of judgment, that the former is under hope, and has the offer of mercy and salvation, but the latter will be in absolute despair; the hope of the former leads him to dread sin and seek deliverance in the use of means." It is granted this is true. Self-love or selfishness will exercise itself in this way in these circumstances; but still this is nothing but selfishness under the influence of fear of evil and hope of escape, and of obtaining happiness;

the heart is no more truly pliable, obedient, and penitent than ever; does not comply in the least degree, but obstinately opposes God and the gospel; and as he does most obstinately resist and trample under his feet the most astonishing mercy, which is freely offered to him, and reject the Son of God in all his amazing condescension and grace, in this view his impenitence, hardness of heart, and obstinacy, appear in a most striking, awful light, and much more aggravated and shocking than that of the latter.

The unregenerate sinner is, therefore, a hardened, impenitent rebel, who with his whole heart opposes and hates God and his holy law, and hates and rejects Jesus Christ and the salvation offered by him, so far as these come into his view and under his notice. He is so under all the awakenings, convictions, and reformations that he is the subject of. Whatever is done to him, and what changes soever he passes through, his character with respect to these things is not altered; he is yet as really under the dominion of sin, and a fixed, impenitent, obstinate enemy to God and Jesus Christ as ever.

The awakened sinner, under all his convictions, terrors, and reformations, and most earnest attempts to escape the evil he sees himself in danger of, and obtain salvation, has no more love and respect to God than he ever had, and is really as much under the power of opposite principles as ever, as has been observed; does not hate sin at all, but is as much in love with it as ever.

Many a profligate wretch, who has long indulged himself in uncleanness and debauchery, when he has been brought into such circumstances that his wickedness is like to be discovered so as to bring disgrace and contempt upon him, and ruin him in all his worldly interests, has been filled with anxiety and distress, so that he could find no quiet night nor day; he has been convinced of his folly, condemned himself, and reformed his vile practices, being afraid to indulge himself in the least degree as he had done, and resolved that he would carefully avoid such conduct for time to come, and has used unwearied attempts to escape the evil he feared; and in this time of his fear and distress has made many prayers to God, hoping that he would interpose in his behalf, so that he might escape the evil he feared. But when his fears were over, and nothing was, in his view, in the way of his going into his former practices without danger of punishment or a discovery, he has returned to them with as much delight and eagerness as ever. In this case every one will be sensible how little in his favor was his reformation, and that under all his fears and terrors, and earnest endeavors to avoid evil, his heart was

really no better than it was before, and was as much in love with sin. This may, in some measure, illustrate the case of the awakened sinner with respect to what I have just now been speaking; for there is no more virtue and goodness in fearing evil in the future world, even the punishment of hell, than worldly evil; and the reformation of any particular practices from such fear is from no better principles and no more an evidence of real opposition of heart to sin than in the instance just mentioned.

The highway robber, who is apprehended and condemned to be hanged, and is hereby thrown into great distress of mind, and most earnestly petitions the king for mercy, and promises reformation and obedience to his laws for time to come, will, as soon as he is set at liberty, and has no fear of being again apprehended, dismiss all his fear and return to the same course again. Will he who views him in this light, in the time of his fears, reformations, and promises, look upon him to be really more penitent, or less an enemy to his king and country, than before he was apprehended? In no better light the unregenerate sinner ought to be viewed under all his awakenings and convictions of conscience.

It hence appears that the awakened, convinced sinner does not, while unregenerate, really yield or give up one point of controversy between him and his Maker, but is as impenitent and obstinate as ever, being still as great a friend to sin and enemy to God as he was before; the principles and exercises of his heart being not in the least abated with respect to this.

And it is of great importance to be observed here, and well attended to, that the unregenerate sinner is wholly to blame for all that in which his unregeneracy consists, it being nothing but wickedness and rebellion of heart, for which the sinner has not the least imaginable excuse. He is under no kind or degree of impotency or difficulty which is in the way of his repentance, loving God, and embracing the gospel, that affords the least excuse for not doing it, or takes off the least degree of blame for his neglect. He is under no kind of inability or difficulty that is in the way of his turning to God immediately, which the open profligate is not under, as a bar in the way of his reforming his wicked conduct immediately. In the latter case all the difficulty lies in the corruption of his heart, and the opposition of his will to it; and this is all the difficulty in the former. And if it is more difficult for a sinner to turn to God through Jesus Christ, with his whole heart, than it is for him to forsake all ways of known sin in external conduct, and he is under a greater inability to do the former than the latter, it is wholly because his will opposes the former more than it

does the latter, or rather because the latter may be complied with consistent with the indulgence of the reigning wickedness of the heart and enmity against God, whereas the former cannot. The reason why the open profligate does not reform his conduct immediately is because he is not willing, or his heart opposes this. And the only reason why the awakened, convinced sinner does not embrace the gospel immediately, but remains obstinately impenitent, is because his will, even his whole heart, opposes it. All the difference is, that in the latter case the opposition of the heart to Jesus Christ is more fixed and strong than it is in the former case to an external reformation; as an external reformation may be complied with consistent with the exercise and gratification of the reigning lusts of the heart, but compliance with the gospel cannot. And is there need of saying any thing to prove that the sinner is perfectly inexcusable and to blame for not doing that in which there is no difficulty but what consists in the want of a will or heart, and the opposition of the will to it? This would be the same thing as to undertake to prove that wickedness of heart, and that in which all sin and blame do consist, is indeed wickedness, sinful, and blameworthy. And if opposition of heart to that which is in itself right, is in all cases sinful and perfectly inexcusable and blameworthy, then the greater is the degree of this opposition; and the more strong, fixed, and perfect it is, the further is the sinner from all excuse, and the more blameworthy. So that the difficulty and inability of loving God and embracing the gospel, in the case before us, is so far from rendering the sinner in any degree blameless or excusable, that the more there is of this the more blameworthy and criminal he is.

Hence it appears that the unregenerate sinner's reigning opposition and enmity of heart against God and the gospel are perfectly criminal and most odious and abominable in his sight, notwithstanding all his awakenings, convictions, and external reformations; the latter do not render the former a whit the less criminal, odious, and abominable, any more than the cleansing and scouring the outside of a cup renders the most offensive, abominable corruption and filthiness of which it is within full, less odious and abominable. Or, (to use another comparison,) no more than the cryings of a stubborn child in dread of the rod which is held over him, and his strivings to get out of his father's hands and escape, serve to extenuate his crime, while he obstinately refuses to own his fault and submit to his father's will, and resolutely opposes him under all his threatenings.

The unregenerate sinner has no sincere desires to repent

and embrace the gospel, or of a new heart. It is the most glaring contradiction to suppose he has; as great a one as to suppose that wickedness is friendly to holiness. These things are not the objects of the desires of the hearts of the unregenerate, but of their aversion and enmity. They desire deliverance from misery, and the enjoyment of happiness, (though not true happiness and the salvation which the gospel offers,) under a conviction that they must repent and submit to Christ in order to escape the one and obtain the other. But their hearts are as far from desiring to repent and turn to God as ever, for if they had a real desire to repent, etc., they would repent; for nothing is in the way of this but opposition of heart. And they make no sincere attempts to turn to God and embrace the gospel, for this would suppose their hearts did not wholly oppose these, which they do, as has been shown; and the whole difficulty of their turning to God, and the only reason of their not doing it immediately, lies in this enmity and opposition.

If any are disposed to look on the awakened sinner as less to blame for his enmity of heart against God, and fixed, obstinate opposition to Christ, because he is externally reformed and greatly distressed under fears that he shall be miserable forever; and if such appear in a great degree harmless and innocent in their sight, they certainly judge in this case according to the outward appearance, and not righteous judgment. In God's sight all that wickedness of heart, in which their unregeneracy consists, and in which they continue wholly impenitent, and enemies to the divine character and the gospel, is perfectly inexcusable and criminal, and infinitely odious; there being no difficulty in their becoming friends to God, etc., but what lies in the voluntary wickedness of their hearts.

Many have made a very great and hurtful mistake here. They represent the impotency of the unregenerate to turn to God and believe in Christ to be such as not to be altogether blamable, if criminal in any degree. They are to blame, wholly to blame, they allow, for not doing what they can do, as they are wont to express it; but if they reform, and do what they can, and cry to God to change their hearts, etc., they are poor creatures, to be pitied that they are in such a sad case; but not much, if at all to blame, for remaining under the dominion of sin, and not embracing the gospel, which they are desiring and honestly attempting, but have no power to do it; so that this is rather their calamity than their sin.

This way of representing the matter has been infinitely mischievous. By thus misrepresenting the doctrine of man's natural impotency, they have rendered it ridiculous to those

who have been disposed to oppose the real truth, and have prejudiced them against it; while they themselves have been unable to defend the doctrine in the light in which they set it, and so have given occasion to the enemies of the truth to triumph. On the other hand, it has proved an agreeable refuge and sweet resting-place to multitudes. By this representation they have been "sewing pillows to all arm-holes," (Ezek. xiii. 18,) and comforting those to whom God speaks no peace. The unregenerate sinner who has reformed all ways of external sin, and allows himself in no known outward evil practices, and prays to God for a new heart, which he thinks he sincerely desires, but that it is wholly out of his power to change his own heart; such a one, I say, makes himself in a great measure easy in an unregenerate state, while he thinks he does all he can. Such a sinner is not under genuine, thorough convictions, and never will, nor possibly can be, while he believes this representation to be just.

And this doctrine of man's inability, as consisting in something which does in some measure excuse, and is consistent with a person's sincere desires of heart to have it removed, and to do what he *cannot* do; this doctrine, I say, is most sweet to many a corrupt heart. Many professing Christians fly to this refuge to hide and rest themselves, by making it an excuse for their not living in constant and high exercises of Christian holiness. They say, "We are poor creatures, we can do nothing of ourselves; if God does not assist us and give us strength, we can do nothing; we have no power of our own." And if they are told the truth of the matter, that they are under no inability but what consists in their inexcusable, voluntary wickedness, that they are wholly to blame for all their defects, etc., they will oppose it with all their might, as what tends to take away their comfort, and rob them of their only refuge. For this doctrine of man's inability, as consisting in some difficulty in the way of holiness which is independent of the will, and for which they are not wholly to blame, is as agreeable to the corrupt heart of man as any Arminian or Pelagian doctrine whatsoever can be. How many of those who are called Calvinists have fled to this refuge of lies, and here are like to perish, God knows! Be this as it will, it certainly becomes all the friends of truth, and of mankind, to do all they can, effectually, to expose this unscriptural, absurd, dangerous notion, and set the truth in a clear light.*

Mr. Mills has, I think, unhappily fallen into this sad and

* This I took pains to do in my remarks on Dr. Mayhew's sermons. Mr. M. has approved of all this, and yet builds all his opposition to me on that which is in direct contradiction to it, as will be seen in the sequel.

dangerous mistake, which is discovered through the whole of his performance, as that on which he grounds all his opposition to me.

He has not said one word, that I have observed, from beginning to end, of the convinced sinner's enmity against God, and obstinate rejection of Christ and the gospel, being under the dominion of a hard, impenitent heart. All this is carefull kept out of sight, unless when he was obliged to mention something of it in his quotations from me; and in this case he always puts in a caveat, observing that I mean no more by these hard terms than merely continuing unregenerate; plainly intimating that he thinks such terms do not properly belong to the unregenerate as such, and that they represent them as worse and more criminal than they really are. He, therefore, every where speaks of the unawakened sinner as impenitent, hardened, and stout hearted, in opposition to one that is awakened, as if this was not true of the latter, and as if the latter was of an opposite character.

And he represents the unregenerate as not wholly to blame for their unregeneracy, their unbelief, and not embracing the gospel, but as being under an impotence which does in some measure, if not wholly, excuse. This representation runs through his whole book, as has been just now observed, and is laid as the foundation of all his opposition to me; this, I conclude, will be quite evident to every attentive reader, before I shall have done. I shall now cite only a few expressions of his which seem to set the matter in this light, especially if considered in connection with others which I am about to mention. He speaks of the awakened, convinced sinner as brought to "reformation and amendment of life, to the highest degree the unregenerate are capable of, by the common influences of the Holy Spirit." He says, they "regard all duty and avoid all sin, that can agree to an unregenerate state." "Thus the poor, trembling, convinced, reformed sinner (I mean as much as an unregenerate sinner can be so) feels his guilt and moral disorder as a desperate, incurable disease, as to all created power, and therefore cries to God for help."

But he goes much further than this, and represents unregenerate sinners in a much more favorable light still. He speaks of such as having great "tenderness of conscience," and "paying such reverence and obedience to the dictates of conscience as hath nourished the greatest degree of tenderness," "one who has nourished the internal light and tenderness of his conscience." He is "in a great degree convinced of the evil of sin — trembles at the thoughts of his past sins, and in fear lest he should offend in thought, word, or deed; feels himself

a lost, perishing creature, and that sovereign mercy only can be his remedy. The poor, trembling, convinced, reformed sinner, whose wickedness, as to the actions of it, is restrained." He is "a humble sinner, brought, though on the principles of nature, to humble himself before God, repent, reform known evils, and conscientiously attend known duties." He is "humbled and slain, by the law, and brought to the feet of divine sovereignty, and a sense of the justice of his condemnation by the law." He is not "utterly sinful," and "honestly attempts to do his duty." They "seek the Lord with trembling, and reform every known sin, and with great concern attend on all known duty." Yea, they "break off from all known sin," even "the secret pride of the heart." They "cry to God for mercy, as their *only* plea — apply to the mercy of God, as the only hope that remains." They, on the whole, desire salvation, and earnestly look to God for the bread of life, as a hungry man desires and seeks bread when his life is at stake. They do all that which is represented by the prodigal's coming to himself, and seeing that there was bread enough and to spare in his father's house, and resolving to arise and go, and confess his sins, and ask mercy, and his actually putting this in execution. So that, according to Mr. M., the unregenerate have their eyes opened to see the wonderful fulness there is in Christ for sinners, so are turned from darkness to marvellous light, and in this view do actually go to God for the mercy he offers in the gospel; and in a sense of their guilt and ill desert, cast themselves at the foot of sovereign grace, placing all their hope in this, heartily desiring to be saved in this way, and no other. They therefore do all, and comply with every thing that is necessary in order to share in God's saving mercy; yea, they do that which is connected with this mercy by Christ himself in this parable, and also through the whole Bible, if there are any promises in the Bible made to any exercises at all.

Moreover, Mr. M.'s unregenerate sinners "frame their doings to turn unto their God." They seek salvation as the greedy merchant seeks goodly pearls. They labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life. They follow on to know the Lord, and seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. In a word, they deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.

This is the account Mr. M. gives of unregenerate sinners under awakenings and convictions; and he has said not only this, but much more in their favor, too much to be transcribed here; upon which I shall make the following remarks: —

1. If this representation of the unregenerate sinner under

convictions is agreeable to the truth, then all that I have said of such in my section on means is wrong and groundless, and such a one is not only less vile than the profligate, but is in a great degree innocent and blameless. He does not sin against the light of his conscience, or abuse it in the least; for he reverences his conscience, and lives up to the dictates of it, avoiding every known sin and coming up to all known duty. He is not properly an impenitent sinner; for he does really repent and humble himself before God. Nor does he obstinately reject Jesus Christ and the gospel; for, on the whole, he desires the salvation which is offered in the gospel, and flies to sovereign mercy there held out to him as his only refuge. As I placed the great guilt and vileness of the unregenerate sinner in his sinning against the light and convictions of his own conscience, in obstinately refusing the offers of the gospel and rejecting Jesus Christ, which he is now convinced he is wholly to blame for, and is the greatest sin he ever was guilty of, I own my charge is quite groundless and very injurious if Mr. M. has given a just and true character of the unregenerate, and I must yield the point to him.

But if all he has said on this head is a gross misrepresentation of the character of the unregenerate sinner, and he applies to them many things which are found in the regenerate only, and if most of his arguments and the plausibleness of all he has said, are founded in this misrepresentation, then all is built on a very slender foundation and really comes to nothing. And I think I have a right to call this a misrepresentation, as I cannot find that Mr. M. has attempted to prove these things, but has taken them for granted and only asserted them; and I think what has been said in this section is sufficient to show that Mr. M.'s account of the unregenerate is very grossly wrong, and this will more fully appear, I trust, before I have done.

2. If Mr. M. has given a just character of the unregenerate, then what I have said of these in my dispute with Dr. Mayhew, on which I founded all my opposition to him, is wholly wrong; for the whole dispute turned upon this question: Whether unregenerate sinners do, on the whole, really desire the salvation offered in the gospel? I asserted that they do not, and undertook to prove it, and owned that if the doctor would prove that they do, he would gain his point, and I was ready to yield it to him. Mr. M. has really taken the doctor's side in this controversy, and represented the unregenerate sinner in as blameless and fair a light as he did, and has raised him as high; yea, has said much more in his favor.

And is it not strange that this same Mr. M. should give me

his "hearty thanks" for what I had written against the doctor, and call it "a finished debate on the point!" Surely, Mr. M. is far from understanding the debate between the doctor and me, and so was very unfit to pronounce any thing about it, or he is very inconsistent with himself. Both are perhaps true.

3. What is still more strange and inconsistent, if possible, is his applying promises to the doings of the unregenerate, or representing them as coming up to that to which promises are expressly made. This appears from what has been just quoted from him. He applies the following words to the unregenerate: "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord." If the unregenerate follow on to know the Lord, then they perform the condition to which there is an express promise that they shall know the Lord. But the knowledge of God is peculiar to true saints and connected with eternal life; and he represents the unregenerate as, on the whole, desiring salvation and humbly applying to God for it, as did the prodigal; and hoping and trusting in the mere mercy of God as exercised to sinners, and asking for it as did the publican. Now, it is certain that promises of salvation are made to all who hope in God's mercy, and really desire the salvation offered in the gospel, and come to Christ for it. Is not this very strange, when he had not only formerly written a book to prove the contrary to this, but in his preface to this, acknowledges I have proved the same beyond all controversy, and heartily thanks me for it!

4. The grand dispute between Mr. M. and me is about the true character of the unregenerate sinner; whether he, under the greatest awakenings and convictions he ever is the subject of, antecedent to regeneration, does not continue an impenitent, voluntary, inexcusable, obstinate enemy to God and the Redeemer? If Mr. M. will grant this, he will grant the sum of what I contend for. But he has been so far from it that all his book is really written against it.

On the whole, Mr. M. has really taken up Dr. Mayhew's cause, and represents the unregenerate sinner in much the same light in which he did, as the ground of most of his arguments to prove that promises are made to him. Mr. M. does not expressly say, indeed, that there are promises made to the unregenerate, but the contrary. But herein he is more inconsistent with himself than was Dr. Mayhew; for, if Mr. M. gives them a true character, the Bible is full of promises to them. And he actually applies passages of Scripture to them which contain promises, as has been observed, and he might with as much propriety apply all those Scriptures to them which Dr. Mayhew does; yea, all the promises in the Bible.

SECTION III.

Arguments for the affirmative of the Question in Dispute.

In order to determine who is the greatest sinner, or what way and manner of sinning is most criminal, or what particular sin is most aggravated, we must first consider and determine wherein the guilt or criminalness of sin, of all sin, chiefly lies, or what is the greatest aggravation of all sin which does, above every thing else, render it vile and criminal.

And in this I suppose all will be agreed who have attended to this matter, and considered what reason and Scripture dictate on this head. The vileness and guilt of sin does chiefly and principally consist in its being committed against God. God is so great and excellent a being, the sum of all existence and perfection, that it is infinitely more criminal not to respect and love him, than it would be to have no love and regard for the whole creation. And it is an infinitely greater crime to oppose and hate God in any way, or in the least degree, than it would be to hate and oppose all creatures, and turn an implacable, eternal enemy to them, if this might be, without hating and opposing God in any respect or degree.

If a person should turn enemy to the whole human race, and with relentless hatred, rage, and thirst for blood, should murder his own parents, and all his relations and friends, in the most cruel manner imaginable, and should he have it in his power, and go on to murder and destroy a whole nation; and should he proceed and actually destroy every one of the human race on earth, yea, put an utter end to the whole creation, and then lay violent hands on himself, and put an end to his own life; and could this be done, and not imply any rebellion against God or opposition to him, but be consistent with perfect love to him, the crime he would be guilty of in all this would be nothing in comparison with the least degree of opposition and disrespect to God; yea, it would be infinitely less than the least motion of heart against God, or the least defect of perfect love to him for one moment. It is granted there can be no such thing as is here supposed; because all hatred and opposition exercised immediately towards our fellow-creatures is implicitly and really opposition to being in general, and so is against God; and it is also against God as it is a violation of his command; and, therefore, the crime of injustice, murder, etc., summarily consists in its being against God, and not in the injury done to our fellow-creatures. This, I conclude, all with whom I am concerned in this dispute will readily grant. I therefore proceed to observe further, —

That act of sin and rebellion against God has immensely more crime and guilt in it, which is exercised and committed directly and immediately against him, than that which is done against him mediately, and more remotely or indirectly. Or, every sin is more or less aggravated and criminal according as it is committed more directly and immediately against God or not, other circumstances being alike.

To illustrate this it may be observed, some sinful exercises and conduct are directly and immediately against God; he is the immediate object against which they are committed, and he is in them directly injured and opposed. We have an instance of this in Pharaoh, when he said, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?" And another in the people of Israel, when they said, "The way of the Lord is not equal."

There are many sins against God more indirectly and remotely. Such are acts of injustice towards our fellow-men. These are ultimately against God, as has been observed, but they are directly and immediately against our fellow-creatures. Such are all those ways and exercises of sin which have the creature for their direct and immediate object. These are more remotely against God, as they are not directly aimed against him, but strike at him more indirectly through the creature.

Now, all acts of sin are more or less aggravated and criminal, according as they are done more or less directly against God, as it has been now explained. An act of direct enmity against God, and a course of direct quarrelling and blasphemy against him, is immensely more criminal than hating and opposing a man, though this is implicitly and more remotely, and by fair construction, against God.

If a man murders one of his fellow-subjects, he hereby acts against his prince; he does him an injury and breaks his laws; but his crime would be immensely greater if he had murdered his prince. If a servant quarrels with his fellow-servants, and abuses them, though this is an injury to his lord, and a violation of his orders, yet this is an unspeakably less crime than that which he is guilty of who rises up immediately against his lord in person, quarrels with him, and strikes him. These instances may serve in some measure to illustrate the case before us, though it must be remembered there is an infinite odds, as in these instances there is some proportion between the crime of murdering a fellow-subject, or abusing a fellow-servant, and that of the same acts done directly against the prince or lord; whereas, in the case before us, there is no proportion, the one being infinitely more criminal than the other.

Let it be still further observed, that those sins that are more immediately and directly against God, as well as all other

may be many ways greatly aggravated, so as to be immensely more criminal than the least supposable sin of this kind. A person's obligations to love God with all his heart may be vastly increased by God's goodness to him, and the great and special favors he receives from him; by the advantages which he is put under to know God and serve him, and the light and instruction which he enjoys; the great and special motives, admonitions, and reproofs set before him, and the variety of means used with him to reclaim him. And his sin in not loving God, but persisting in impenitence and rebellion against him, is criminal in proportion to the increase of his obligations by means of these things, and others of the same kind, that might be mentioned.

And it must be particularly observed here, that what God has done for the redemption of man by Jesus Christ, and the offers of free pardon and salvation through him, does aggravate the sinner's guilt in sinning against God above any thing else; and sinning against Christ and the gospel, and rejecting and despising him, are immensely the highest and most criminal acts of sin against God that can be.

Had there been no redemption of lost man, had not the infinitely great, worthy, and glorious Son of God become incarnate, and by his obedience and sufferings obtained redemption and eternal life for man, who is sunk into an infinitely guilty and miserable state by sin, even for all who shall be willing to be saved by him; I say, had not this astonishing scene of mercy been opened by this infinitely worthy and excellent Mediator, mankind never could have had opportunity to sin as they do now; they could not have been in any measure guilty of such amazingly aggravated crimes as they now are. All other sins are small compared with this of neglecting this great salvation with persevering obstinacy and contempt, and rejecting and despising the glorious Savior, offering himself to sinners in the most kind and condescending manner, and urging them to accept of him as their complete Redeemer, by the most powerful motives and arguments imaginable. The devils have never sinned, nor can they sin in such an aggravated manner, because they have no such offers, no such salvation to reject, no such Redeemer to despise. What are all the sins of the heathen world to this? They sink, as it were, into nothing when compared with it. What are all the sins of Sodom to this? No wonder Christ tells the inhabitants of Capernaum, who had rejected him, when he offered himself to them, that it would be more tolerable in the day of judgment for the most abandoned profligates of Sodom, than for them; and tells the seventy, when he sent

them to preach the gospel, that the city which should not receive them, should, for this sin only, let their conduct otherwise be as it would, receive a heavier doom than the Sodomites should for all their abominable, open debauchery and wickedness, which cried to heaven and brought terrible vengeance on their heads. (Luke x. 10–12.) And this view of the case gives a very natural and easy meaning to Christ's words, when he says, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin." (John xv. 22.) All the sins they could have committed, had not a Savior appeared and instructed them, and offered himself to them, would have been light, and as nothing, compared with the sin of hating and rejecting him, which they were now guilty of. And perfectly agreeable to this are the following words of his: "And when he (i. e. the Spirit) is come, he will reprove the world of sin, because they believe not on me." (John xvi. 9.) Here, not believing on Christ is represented as the greatest sin men can be guilty of, so that it does, in a sense, swallow up all other sins, as not to be mentioned with this, this being the sum of all. This is the great sin for which the Spirit will reprove men, when he does his work effectually, and thoroughly convinces of sin. Hence we may certainly infer that they who submit to this reproof, and are truly convinced of sin, see this sin to be so great that all other sins are as nothing to it. Therefore, that this is the great aggravation of all their sins, and that in which their guilt and vileness principally consists. All the sin men commit under the gospel, all the most abominable uncleanness and debauchery, all the murder, profaneness, and blasphemy, that men are or can be guilty of, under the gospel, have their chief aggravation in this, that they are against Jesus Christ, and carry in them unbelief and opposition to him; so that unbelief itself, in all the actings and exercises of it, is unspeakably a greater crime than all this wickedness, considered in itself, and not as implying and expressing unbelief and rejection of Jesus Christ; and, therefore, unspeakably more criminal and vile than all the sins of Sodom, as they had no opportunity to sin against Christ as gospel sinners do. Or, to express it in other words: All the sins of Sodom, and all the abominations that have been committed by the worst of men, or that men can possibly commit, without being guilty of unbelief and rejecting Christ and the gospel, are incomparably less criminal and vile than this sin of unbelief, or not receiving but rejecting Christ, when he is revealed and offered to men; so that when the former are put in the scale with the latter, they are light and as nothing to this. Who can doubt of this, since it is so fully and necessarily implied in what Christ

himself has declared more than once? especially when the reason of it is so apparent to every one who will seriously attend to the matter. It hence appears certain, even to a demonstration, that he is the most guilty, vile sinner who exercises the greatest degree of unbelief, or does most directly, and in the strongest and most obstinate manner, reject Jesus Christ. Whether the awakened, convinced sinner does this, or whether his unbelief and opposition to Jesus Christ and the gospel is less in the strength and degree of its exercise, I shall more particularly consider presently.

It must be observed yet further, that unbelief, or an impenitent rejecting Jesus Christ now, under the full blaze of gospel light and clear convictions of conscience, is much more criminal and vile than it was when Christ was on earth, because they then had not so much light, such a fulness of means and advantages, even under the preaching of Christ and in sight of his miracles, as we now have. This might be easily proved, was there need; but I suppose none will dispute it. Therefore, if unbelief and rejecting him was so great a sin, and did so far outweigh all other sins in guilt as to be, as it were, the only sin and sum of all, in comparison with which all others were hardly to be mentioned, how amazingly great must be the guilt of this sin now; especially in them who have the greatest advantages and the most light of every kind, and for whom the most is done, even all that can be done short of regenerating grace!

The Scripture elsewhere sets the matter in this light, and represents the crime of disregarding Christ and rebelling against him, when he speaks directly and immediately unto them, as unspeakably greater than disobedience to his word when spoken by others, and so that he is not so fully and directly in view.

To this purpose are the following words: "For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him?" (Heb. ii. 2, 3.) Here two things are observable, —

1. The great crime spoken of, which will issue in the most awful condemnation and punishment, is a bare neglect of the salvation offered by Christ.

2. The great and peculiar aggravation of this crime is spoken of as consisting in the direct rebellion against Jesus Christ which this neglect carries in it, as he has himself, in his own person, revealed and offered this salvation to men.

This being more direct and immediate rebellion against him than was the disobedience to a revelation made by angels.

The same thing is set in a yet stronger light in the same epistle: "He that despised Moses's law, died without mercy. Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God?" etc. (Heb. x. 28, 29.) Despising the law of Moses was despising God; but he who despises Jesus Christ, does more directly sin against him, and, therefore, sins in a higher and more aggravated manner.

This is again set in the same light: "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh; for if they escape not who refused him that spoke on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven." (Heb. xii. 25.)

They who refused Moses, who spoke on earth, (by whom are most probably meant Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and those who sinned with them,) did rebel against Christ, but not immediately and directly. They had no thought of opposing Christ, but intended their opposition directly against Moses. They who reject the gospel turn away from Christ, and directly oppose and reject him who speaks to them from heaven; and this is here considered as an unspeakable aggravation of the sin of the latter above that of the former. And it is to be here observed, that the sin here spoken of as the great sin, and so greatly aggravated by this circumstance, consists wholly in refusing, or turning away from Christ, of which every unregenerate sinner is constantly guilty; but more especially awakened, convinced sinners, to whom Christ speaks in a degree and manner he does not to others, even to their consciences, and who knowingly, and under conviction of what they are doing, turn away from him and refuse to hear him.

From this view of things, it will follow that the awakened, convinced sinner, who persists in unbelief and rejection of Jesus Christ, is more guilty and vile in the state and exercises of his mind than he was in a state of security, if he more directly and immediately opposes God and Jesus Christ, and with as great or greater strength of heart than he did before; and this, I think, will appear to be true beyond all contradiction or doubt, if the following things are well considered: —

The secure, unawakened sinner does not sin so directly and immediately against God as does the awakened, convinced sinner. God is very little in his view and thoughts. It is with him in this respect very much as if there was no God and no Savior. His perfect selfishness, which carries in it opposition to God and Jesus Christ, is exercised not directly against

God and the gospel, but in seeking what appears to him the greatest good, in the gratification of his selfishness and lusts, which lead him directly to oppose and injure his fellow-creatures in a greater or less degree. He may sin against the light of his conscience in a degree, but then this light and these dictates are supposed to be weak and in a low degree, else he would not be a secure, unawakened sinner; for so far as a person's conscience is enlightened to show him his sin and real danger, it must give him uneasiness, because selfishness itself is necessarily averse to misery, and he must be uneasy so far as he sees himself exposed to it. This is the great difference between the secure and awakened, convinced sinner; the former is not convinced of his sin and danger in any measure as it really is, and so as to give him any uneasiness about it; the latter is in a greater measure convinced of both; and the light and dictates of his conscience, showing the connection of his present state and conduct, if persisted in, with eternal misery, are the sole ground of all the alteration of his conduct, his exercises, and distress of mind. The secure sinner may, indeed, have a sort of conviction of conscience that what he allows himself in is wrong and contrary to God's commands, but has no clear apprehensions of his sinfulness, and does not realize it that he is acting against God, or that God is angry with him and will certainly destroy him, if he persists in his ways. He only wants to have clear and full conviction of conscience of this in order to be an awakened, convinced sinner.

On the other hand, the awakened, convinced sinner sins more directly and immediately against God and the Savior, and in the face of the clear dictates of his own conscience. If a sinner's conscience is only awakened to see that the ways of allowed external wickedness in which he lives lead to hell, so as to excite him to reform his life, and so comes up to the dictates of his conscience and makes himself easy, — which has been the case with thousands, — this is not the awakened, convinced sinner of which I am speaking. The conscience of the sinner I am now attending to is so enlightened that he sees he must perish forever unless he willingly submits to Jesus Christ and trusts in him, to which he is invited and urged by the strongest motives, and to which he is under indispensable obligations. And under this light and conviction of conscience, he feels himself going to a dreadful hell for his impenitence and unbelief, and continuing to reject Jesus Christ and the gospel, and yet persists in his obstinacy and most daring rebellion against God, and horrid abuse of the most worthy and astonishingly merciful Redeemer; for which he is convinced he has no excuse.

He is now diverted from the pursuit of worldly pleasures in the gratification of those lusts which urged him on in a state of security, and his attention is turned more immediately and directly to God and the Redeemer, and his heart is exercised in direct opposition and enmity to the divine character and the Savior, and goes into an immediate quarrel with God. It appears, therefore, that in this respect, his exercises of opposition to God are immensely aggravated.

And it is to be observed, that his exercises of heart, now they are turned directly against God and the Savior, are as strong and vigorous as ever; and he not only opposes God more directly, and against the clear light of his conscience, but more strongly, and exercises a greater degree of hatred and enmity, against his character and ways, than he did before. He was an enemy to God before, and all his exercises and conduct were a mediate and implicit opposition to him, even while he had little or no idea of his character, and few thoughts of God. But now the divine character and conduct are in some measure brought into view, and the attention of his mind is held up to them, which necessarily occasions a greater degree of the exercise of opposition, hatred, and enmity than when the hateful object was less in view, so long as he is no more reconciled to this character than he was, and the enmity of the heart is not at all abated or weakened. This is the case in all instances of opposition of heart, and fixed enmity to each other's persons and characters among men. These enemies, while they are out of each other's view, and think little or nothing of each other, will have no direct and positive exertions of hatred and enmity. But let them be brought into each other's view, and come together, and their enmity will rise into direct and strong exercises, and ferment to a high degree. We find it so with regard to any thing at which we have a peculiar and fixed disgust and aversion; the nearer it is brought to us, and the more it is in our view, the more lively and strong is our aversion to it. And there can be no possible reason given why it should not be so in the case before us; yea, it is absolutely impossible it should be otherwise. It also appears, from another consideration, that in this case the exercises of opposition and enmity to God and the Redeemer must be strong in proportion to the increase of light and conviction, and the powerful motives which are opposed; for it requires a greater exertion of opposition to resist greater light and more powerful motives than it does to resist less.

Thus we see the awakened, convinced sinner not only exerts himself more directly against God and the Redeemer than he did in a state of security, but does this in a much higher

and stronger degree; on which account his wickedness is immensely increased.

It is also to be remembered that his sinfulness is not only increased in the greater strength and vigor of his opposition of heart to God and the Savior, but these exercises are now more constant and numerous, as the mind is awakened up to the greatest attention to these things, and is more engaged in thoughts and exercises, perhaps, than ever it was in a state of security; and he thinks now a thousand times more about God and Christ than he did, and his exercises of heart are proportionably constant and numerous. But these exercises are all against God and the gospel; therefore, the more constant and numerous they are, the more guilty and vile the sinner is.

Besides, the light and conviction of conscience the sinner has, not only occasions more direct acts of opposition to God, which are also more strong, constant, and numerous than they could be in a state of security, but the superior light they have in the awakening and conviction of their conscience greatly aggravates all their impenitence and opposition to God. God has not only given them an external revelation, and put them, in common with all others under the gospel, under advantage to know the truth and obey the gospel, but has done much more for them. When they were going on stupid and inconsiderate under this light, he has ordered a light to be forcibly let into their consciences, and given them a thousand times more light than they had in a state of security; and which they never would have had if God had not interposed. This must be considered as a great favor and advantage in itself, by which they are unspeakably distinguished from sinners in a state of ignorance, security, and ease; which favor and advantage they sin against and abuse, by which all their rebellion and obstinacy in hating and opposing God and rejecting the gospel is immensely aggravated. So that this distinguished light and conviction, being rebelled against and resisted, becomes the occasion of an amazing increase of guilt and vileness, instead of making it less.

If this will be the condemnation of men, that light is come into the world, and they have loved darkness rather than light; have hated the light, opposed and sinned against it; surely they shall be thought worthy of the greatest condemnation who have persisted in sin and rebellion in opposition to the clearest light, let into their consciences by God's special interposition, in an uncommon and extraordinary degree.

Let it be also observed, that the awakened, convinced sinner, under all his conviction and external reformation, persists

in the neglect of all that God requires of him, and wholly and obstinately refuses to comply in the least degree, as he withholds his whole heart from God and Jesus Christ, and neglects and refuses to love God or his fellow-men, or to hearken to Christ, whom he is commanded to hear and obey, by all the authority of Heaven. And this neglect of his whole duty is immensely aggravated by the light and conviction he now has; by which he sees what is his duty, and what is his interest, a thousand times more fully and clearly than any secure, unawakened sinner does. Jesus Christ does now, by all this light and conviction let into his conscience, "stand at the door and knock," in a manner and degree in which he did not before. If this is justly considered it will appear that the increase of guilt, by this means only, is so great that no supposed reformation in external conduct will in any measure balance it, even on supposition that there is as much negative goodness as any one is disposed to imagine. All the negative goodness that can be supposed in any external reformation is immensely overbalanced by the increase of positive guilt and vileness which now takes place in the convinced sinner in the way just now mentioned.

Let it be further observed, that this reformation in his external behavior and conduct is not from the least degree of right principle and exercise, or because he is at heart more friendly to God, or in any degree a less enemy; but purely from self-love, even that very self-love, in the exercise of which he now sets himself directly against God, and goes into a course of more immediate opposition to him. God has ordered light and conviction to be given to his conscience, and has in this way taken him and shaken him over hell, and caused the fire of his wrath, as it were, to flash in his face. This has filled him with terror, and has deadened his heart to all his worldly pursuits, in which before he pleased and gratified himself. The fears of hell have put a stop to all his former courses, and turned all his attention to his future and eternal interest, in the exercise of the same selfishness, which, in a state of security urged him into all his overt acts of open or secret wickedness. And this darling lust he will not give up, nor is it abated in the least degree, but he exercises it in as high a degree as ever, yea, much more strongly, in direct opposition to God and the Savior, in all his exercises and attempts with respect to the salvation he desires. He is restrained from the overt acts of allowed sin he lived in before by nothing but the fears of hell. Take this out of the way and he will return to his old courses with more greediness than ever. And if he was not afraid of God, but really thought he could oppose him

with impunity and success, all his fears and prayers would cease in a moment, and he would go right into allowed, overt acts of direct rebellion and blasphemy against him. This I observe, that we may judge more agreeably to the truth of the reformation of the awakened sinner; and, surely, if we view this matter in a true light, we shall find nothing in the greatest reformation of this kind that will in any degree counterbalance the immensely greater guilt and vileness which the awakening and conviction of conscience that he has fallen under is the occasion of.

His heart is in no respect better, more friendly to God, or less an enemy to him. The principles and motives on which he reforms are really as bad as those under the influence of which he before went on in open sin. Yea, they are the same; and now his wickedness is turned into another channel, and exercised more directly and in a higher degree against God.

No external conduct is better or worse, or has any thing of a moral nature in it, any further than is connected with the heart, and is considered as the expression and effect of the voluntary exercises of that. And all the guilt and vileness of it lies in these exercises of the heart. So that every person is more or less guilty and vile according as the exercises of his heart are; and he whose heart is not mended, and made better or less vile than it has been, is not really reformed at all, whatever alteration there is in his external conduct. If, then, the heart is yet as unfriendly to God, and opposes him as much as ever, yea, in a more direct and stronger manner, with what propriety can he, upon the whole, be called a reformed sinner? Mr. M. has made great use of this phrase, *the reformed sinner;* and he has constantly used it so that it tends to blind and deceive the reader, who is not disposed to look to the bottom of this matter.

If these things are impartially considered, and we keep in view the high and glorious character of the Mediator, and the astonishing grace of the gospel, and the state and character of the sinner who continues voluntarily to hate, oppose, and reject the Mediator with all his heart, under the greatest light and conviction of conscience, for which he has no more reason or excuse than he would have for any overt acts of most gross wickedness; I say, if this matter is well and impartially considered, I believe it will appear most evident that the awakened, convinced sinner is much more guilty and vile in the exercises of his heart than he could be, on any supposition, in a state of security.

Mankind do commonly judge quite wrong and contrary to truth in this matter. They overlook the great malignity of

sin, and are ignorant of that wherein its guilt and vileness chiefly consists, and so judge according to outward appearance, and not righteous judgment. It is common for persons to look upon the least degree of injustice towards men in dealing with them, especially if they themselves are directly injured by it in any degree, to be a greater crime than the highest acts of profaneness and taking God's name in vain a thousand times, and the former is unspeakably more odious and vile in their eyes than the latter. The reason is, because God is very much out of their sight and thoughts, and they have no real love and respect to him; so, see not any real injury done by the latter, or any thing very bad or shameful in it, especially when it is very much the custom and fashion. But they are all sensibility to their own interest; therefore are ready to hate those who oppose and injure them, and look on them as very vile and criminal, even as deserving eternal damnation.

There are multitudes who are governed by the prejudices of education, or wholly by outward appearance in their views and judgment of things of this kind; yea, this is very common, if not most generally the case. By the force of education, and the common sentiments and customs where persons live, many practices appear most odious, shockingly vile, and shameful, which are really unspeakably less criminal than other things which appear to them to be innocent, and even commendable. Instances of this are so common and apparent that it is needless to illustrate it by examples. *

All persons that are unawakened are wont to judge of themselves with respect to their sinfulness, and the degree of their guilt and vileness, by their external conduct; therefore their first convictions of conscience most commonly fix upon that by which they first begin to learn their own sinfulness, God's anger with them, and the sad state they are in; this puts them

* Mr. M. has, in much that he has said on this head, applied to the imagination, and to the prejudices of mankind with respect to these things, as will be observed by the attentive reader; which I think has no tendency to give light, but rather to blind and deceive. He seems to be sensible of the advantage he has to influence his reader by this way of treating the matter, which appears not only by his taking this method, as has been observed, but by his guarding against a strict examination of the matter by sound and clear reasoning and argument, calling it "metaphysical reasoning and argument," and endeavoring to prejudice the reader against it, as that which is not to be depended upon or regarded; as any thing, and even contraries, may be proved by it. But they who will not lay aside the common prejudices that mankind are under, and a mere warm imagination, and attend closely to the dictates of sound, accurate reasoning, (which I call "metaphysical arguments," and at present know not what else Mr. M. can mean by this phrase;) I say, they who will not do this, are like to live in darkness and delusion, and to believe any thing, be it never so absurd and contrary to Scripture and reason.

upon reformation of their sins, omissions and commissions, which now stare them in the face, as provoking to God and leading to destruction. By this they hope to mend their case, and become in a great degree innocent, so as to remove the curse of God's displeasure; and if they receive no further light and conviction, they will rest in this, and think all is well, but if they go on to any good degree of thorough conviction, they will see things in quite a different light, and find that in themselves which is unspeakably more criminal than any thing which they saw before — that this vileness lies in their heart, which is not at all mended by all their external reformations and duties.

I say not these things with a view to extenuate the guilt and vileness of the open profligate, and of those open sins which are justly shocking and terrible, or to lead any persons to look on them as less vile and odious than they now do. No, far be it! These sins are immensely more heinous and vile than the profligate thinks them to be, or than any one else can fully conceive. The secure, unconvinced sinner is guilty and vile beyond, far beyond any thing he ever imagined. His guilt and vileness exceed all thought. But yet all this, viewed in a comparative light, may be little and as nothing when compared with the immensely more aggravated guilt of a sinner persisting in rebellion, impenitence, and obstinacy in opposition to the clear light and dictates of his conscience. Our Savior's representing the inhabitants of Capernaum as worse than those of Sodom, is nothing in favor of the open abominations that were practised by the latter, nor tends to extenuate their criminalness, or encourage such practices; but only sets the guilt of the former in a true and striking light.

What has been said on this argument may be, in some measure, represented by the following similitude: —

In the distant parts of the realm of a great and good prince there lived a man who was brought up without any true apprehensions of the character of his prince, or any degree of true affection or regard to him, his government, or any of his subjects, but under the influence of directly opposite principles. When he grew up, and came to act for himself, he appeared perfectly selfish, having no regard to any one any further than he could answer his own ends by him; and therefore hating and opposing every one who in his view stood in the way of his good and interest, which he greedily pursued in the gratification of his voracious appetites and lusts. In the eager pursuit of sensual pleasures, riches, and honors, he injured many of his fellow-subjects many ways, and to a great degree. At length they opposed him so much in his pursuits that he fell

upon them, and killed some thousands, and took their goods as a booty to himself. He was often told that these practices were a gross violation of the laws of his prince, and that he would one day call him to an account, and punish him for it. But he gave very little heed to this; he never entertained a serious thought about it, and did not really believe what was told him, though he assented to it as truth, and never disputed it in his own mind. Indeed, it was not often that he had a thought of his prince, though he was frequently spoken of in his hearing, and his laws were read to him, threatening such practices as he lived in with the severest punishment; and when he did think of him, he could not realize it that he was angry with him, or would ever punish him, as he did not think he had ever done him any hurt, or was in the least unfriendly to him, and as he always took him to be a very kind and merciful prince. Thus he went on in ignorance, security, and ease for many years.

At length, the prince sent a special officer with orders to apprehend him, confiscate all his goods and hang him in gibbets, as a monument of his displeasure and vengeance, unless he would become a hearty friend to him, repent of his rebellion, and submit to his laws and government as good and excellent, and accept of a free pardon, which he was ready to grant through the interposition of his own son, who had interposed his own merit with his father in behalf of this rebel, and became an earnest intercessor for him, having himself undertaken to make good all the damages this wretch had done to him and his kingdom; which pardon was now freely offered to him without money or price, if he was willing to receive it through the interposition of this son of the prince, and ready to depend wholly upon his merit and worthiness for it, and give himself up to him, considered in this character, and be his friend and faithful servant to the end of his life.

Upon his being thus apprehended, and finding what orders were given, his mind was filled with anxiety and distress in a view of the evil case he had brought himself into; and he forsook his former courses immediately, not because he was at heart any more friendly to his fellow-subjects, or any better disposed towards his prince, or less inclined to rebellion; but merely through the fears and terrors which had seized his mind in a view of the terrible punishment he was threatened with. He dreaded the punishment, and thought of it with horror. But when he considered the character and government of the prince, he found himself in no degree pleased with it, but the contrary. He found he was not willing to accept of a pardon on such terms, and was greatly displeased with the person,

character, and conduct of the son; for in all he had done to procure his pardon, he had justified his father, and condemned the rebel to the highest possible degree. He, therefore, now went into a course of direct opposition to the prince and his son; and he was so far from being willing to accept of the pardon and deliverance offered, that he rejected the whole with great disgust and contempt; and the more he attended to the affair, and considered the character of the prince and his son, and their treatment of him, the more did his heart rise in opposition to them and the offers made to him. The officer in whose custody he was, often led him to the place of execution, where he saw numbers of rebels hanging and slowly expiring in the greatest tortures; and this sight filled his soul with the greatest distress and horror, not knowing but he should be executed immediately, and greatly fearing it; but this did not reconcile him in the least degree to his prince or his son, or dispose him to accept of the pardon offered. He had as great an aversion and opposition of heart to the latter as to the former, and this opposition was apparent, and exerted with a degree of strength and stubbornness in proportion to his dread of the evil threatened. And this was also the case when he attended to the promises made him upon his submission; the more he desired the deliverance offered, the more strongly did his heart oppose the condition.

At the same time his heart was really no more against his former practices than ever, he being yet as much as ever under the power of the same principles and lusts which led him to them, in the circumstances in which he was then. And this was apparent from fact; for the officer gave him his liberty for a few days, upon which all his fears and terrors ceased, and he, thinking the bitterness of death was past, returned to his former courses with as much greediness as ever; yea, vastly more.

When the officer seized him again his former views and terrors and dread of the prince returned. He was all attention to his case, and employed all his thoughts to find out some way to escape. Could he have found any way to deliver himself from the hand and power of the prince, or had it been in his power to dethrone him and his son, he would have done it with all his heart; but as he knew this was impossible, he applied to his prince daily with earnest petitions that he would pity his case, and at least mitigate his punishment, offering to suffer any thing short of death. He made his great reformation a plea for pardon and deliverance, and made great promises of what he would do, if he would release him from this punishment; but when he found all this availed nothing, but

was esteemed by the prince and his son as real rebellion against them, it being in direct opposition to what they insisted on, and the fruit of enmity to their character and conduct, and that nothing would do or avail in his behalf but a hearty acceptance of the pardon offered, with a heart friendly to the prince, and ready to justify him in all his conduct towards him, and a thankful acceptance of the mediation of his son, being heartily willing to be his servant for life, as the greatest privilege he could think of, — I say, when he found this to be true, his mind was filled with more dreadful apprehensions. Yet his heart did not relent and yield at all, and was so far from becoming any more friendly to the prince, that it swelled with the most horrid enmity against him; at the same time that he was told, and he was convinced in his conscience, that the prince and his son had acted a becoming part, and were amazingly kind to him, and that he was under the highest obligations immediately to submit to them, and perfectly without any excuse for not doing it. In this way of quarrelling directly with the prince and his son, and obstinately refusing their kindest offers, he spent many years, until the prince resolved to wait on him no longer, and ordered him to be executed.

Now, is it not easy to determine in which part of this man's life he was most guilty and vile? Was he not unspeakably more so in the latter than in the former, in which he had so much more done for him, by which he was brought to such light and conviction of conscience, and in consequence of which his heart turned more directly and strongly against his prince, and exerted itself against him in a much higher degree of opposition and malignity, directly in the face of all this light and conviction, and contrary to the strong and pressing motives set before him to a friendly submission? Would not he be justly looked upon as an enemy to the prince and his son, or at least to have low thoughts of their character, and to be a friend to the rebel and take his part, who should so much as doubt of this? Much more so, if he should take a great deal of pains to represent the rebel when apprehended by the officer, and in the circumstances and exercises that have been described, as greatly reformed and much better in the state of his mind, and in a great degree innocent and blameless, compared with what he was before.

And if this is a plain case, I see not why that before us is not much more so. The difference appears to me so great, and the awakened, convinced sinner to be so much more guilty and vile than he was or could be in a state of security, that, when the matter is justly stated, I see not how any can

be at a loss about it. And I cannot but be confident that it will be as manifest to the attentive, impartial reader that the former is immensely more guilty and vile than the latter, as it is to any one that the whole earth is bigger than the least pebble, and vastly outweighs it; there being no more need of nice scales, and critical, metaphysical distinctions to decide in the one case than in the other.

However, if the unregenerate sinner, as to his absolute character, is viewed in a just light, which I suppose is that in which he is set in this and the foregoing sections, I have answered the great end I proposed, whether the consequence is thought to be just or not with respect to his comparative guilt and vileness. I said what I did on this head, in my section on means, with a design to oppose that very notion of an awakened, convinced sinner which Mr. M. contends for; which is not much different, if at all, from that which Dr. Mayhew had, and which I knew was very common even among professed Calvinists; which I thought to be directly contrary to the truth, and of a very bad tendency. If, therefore, what I have said, fully and clearly exposes and confutes this notion of the sinner's absolute character, I have obtained what I chiefly had in view, even though it should not be thought to be made evident beyond all dispute that such a one is more guilty and vile than he could be, or than sinners generally are, in a state of ignorance and security. Though, I confess, I know not how any one can have a just view of the character and exercises of the former, and not pronounce him, beyond comparison, more guilty and vile than the latter.

I considered the matter in this comparative view on purpose to set the guilt and vileness of the awakened, convinced sinner in a striking light. I find Christ took this method to represent the great guilt and vileness of the inhabitants of Capernaum, and convince them of it. He told them they were more guilty than the inhabitants of Sodom were. This was, doubtless, as shocking and offensive to thousands as the comparison I have made has been to Mr. M. or any one else. And it would be easy to show that this shocking, offensive saying of our Savior might be most successfully opposed in the very way and by the same arguments which Mr. M. has made use of against me. This leads me to what is to be the subject of the next section.

SECTION IV.

The Way Mr. M. evades several Passages of Scripture which were referred to in Support of what he opposes, examined.

In my section on means, I entered into no labored proof of what I advanced with respect to the increase of the guilt of the awakened, convinced sinner; I only stated the character of such in a few words here, having done it more largely in a former section, and then referred to several texts of Scripture, supposing they proved what I had asserted beyond all controversy, the sinner's character being allowed to be justly stated. In all I say on this head, I keep in view the sinner's character, as one who does "continue obstinately to oppose light and truth, and reject the offers of the gospel." Mr. M. does not expressly deny this to be true of the awakened sinner. He, indeed, gives a quite different character of such, though he never once attempts to prove that mine is wrong, or that his is right. And as he builds all his opposition to me on this mere supposition, without any proof, it appears to me a very sandy foundation, which is no way sufficient to support the superstructure. He ought, in the first place, to have excepted against the character I had given of the awakened sinner, and proved it not just, and then established his own; and this would have finished the controversy; for the whole debate between him and me turns upon this, as it did in that between Dr. Mayhew and me as has been before observed. It will appear, I trust, on examination, that what Mr. M. has said to show that the Scriptures I adduced to prove my point are not to the purpose, is grounded on a supposition that the character I have given of the convinced sinner is not true, and therefore, that the most he says here, as well as elsewhere, is rather an unfair begging of the question than a confutation of what I have advanced.

The passages of Scripture I mentioned are the following: "And this is the condemnation, that light has come into the world, and men have loved darkness rather than light." (John iii. 19.) "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin." (John xv. 22.) And what Christ says of those cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, and who had the most light and instruction by his preaching, and yet continued impenitent, viz., that they were, on this account, more guilty than the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon, and even Sodom itself. (Matt. xi. 20–24.) And St. Paul says the gospel is "a savor of death unto death, in them that perish." (2 Cor. ii. 15, 16.)

The general answer Mr. M. gives to this is, that these Scriptures say nothing of an awakened, convinced sinner; nothing of that light which is let into the conscience, which he calls internal light, but have respect only to what he calls external, objective light; so are nothing to the purpose.

I thought these passages proved that opposing and rejecting the light of the gospel, and continuing impenitent, obstinate enemies to Christ, in the face of this light, and direct abuse of it, was unspeakably the greatest crime men can be guilty of; that this will be the principal ground of their condemnation, as that in which their guilt chiefly consists; and that the awakened, convinced sinner had much more of this light than others let into his conscience, which he opposed and rejected more directly, and with greater strength and obstinacy than he did the small degree of light which he had before, and much more against the dictates of his own conscience. From this state of the case, it appeared to me a plain and undeniable consequence, that the awakened, convinced sinner is more guilty and vile in the state and exercises of his mind than when he was ignorant and secure; and it appears in the same light to me now. If sinning against and opposing the light of the gospel is the chief aggravation of all sin, and that in which persons' guilt under the gospel summarily consists, then he who sins against the greatest and clearest light, and that most directly, and with the greatest degree of opposition of heart, must be the greatest sinner. I see not that the distinction which Mr. M. makes between external, objective light, and internal light, a light in the judgment and conscience, is any thing to this purpose. If two men are under the same external revelation, but one has special pains taken with him to inculcate the truth revealed, by which his judgment and conscience is convinced, while the other has really no more light in his judgment and conscience than if no revelation had been made; if the chief of their guilt lies in opposing and rejecting the light of this revelation, surely he who has so much the most light and advantage must be unspeakably the greatest sinner while he continues wholly to oppose and reject it all. The wickedness of the latter, his want of love to the truth and opposition of heart to it, keeps the light which is set before him wholly out of his mind and conscience, and this will be the chief matter of his condemnation. The other would have continued as blind and ignorant as he, had not light been forced into his conscience by some extraordinary means, which he now hates and opposes in a manner and degree which the latter has no opportunity to do.

And now, who can be at a loss which is the greatest sinner?

Mr. M. represents the secure sinner as very criminal in sinning against the light of his conscience, and by this means wasting his conscience, as he expresses it; and speaks of this as the great aggravation of all his crimes. This is as really internal light as that of the awakened, convinced sinner, it being of the same nature and kind, and all the difference is in the degree of light; and if sinning against the former is a great crime, yea, that in which the guilt of the secure sinner, who goes on in open wickedness, chiefly consists, then surely the latter is a greater sinner than the former in proportion to the greater degree of light of conscience which he sins against. It would be strange, indeed, if sinning against and opposing a small degree of light of conscience should be very criminal, even the greatest of all crimes, but sinning against and opposing an immensely greater degree of light of conscience should be quite harmless and innocent. But so it must be, if there is any reason in this distinction which Mr. M. makes. In making this distinction he has flatly contradicted himself, as has been observed; for he allows that opposition to this same internal light and conviction of conscience in the unawakened sinner is the chief aggravation of his crimes. To be consistent with himself on this head, he must hold, that light and conviction of conscience does in no case aggravate the sins of men; but he is the greatest sinner who has the least knowledge and understanding, and whose judgment and conscience dictates nothing at all with respect to what is right or wrong; and he is the least guilty, or certainly not more, who has the most understanding and light of conscience, though he abuses and sins against it all.

Our Savior says, "That servant which *knew* his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes." (Luke xii. 47, 48.) It would be a forced construction of these words indeed, to say that the meaning is not that he who actually knows what God requires, and neglects to do it in opposition to his judgment and conscience, is most guilty, and shall be beaten with many stripes; but he who is under advantages to know, but does not really know any thing about his Lord's will, shall be beaten with few stripes. It is true that he who is under advantages to know the will of God, and yet knows it not, is more guilty and worthy of a greater punishment if he acts contrary to his will, than he who was under no advantages, and had no opportunity to know. Yea, the latter is not guilty at all, so does not things worthy of any stripes, because in this case his ignorance is properly *invincible*. There-

fore, our Savior has no reference to such a case. But by him that knew not his Lord's will, and yet did things worthy of stripes, he must mean one who is under advantages to know, at least in some degree, and yet does not know. And by him that knew his Lord's will, he means one that really and actually knew it; that is, has internal light, conviction, and sensibility of conscience. He, then, who sins against this light is the greatest criminal; and the greater is the degree of this light and knowledge, the more guilty and vile he is.

Mr. M.'s distinction, therefore, is not only contrary to all reason and common sense, but directly contrary to these words of our Savior. He who actually knows his Lord's will, let his light and knowledge come how it will, whether in a miraculous way or by a standing external revelation; and whether he was brought to understand this by some extraordinary providence, which awakened his attention and roused his conscience, or by the influence of the Holy Spirit; I say, let his light and conviction of conscience come in either of these ways, or in any other, if he does not act according to his knowledge, but neglects to come up to the dictates of his conscience, this light and knowledge unspeakably aggravates his guilt.

But let us hear what Mr. M. has to say to vindicate his distinction, and show that, though external light does greatly aggravate the guilt of sinners under the gospel, yet internal light of an awakened conscience does not. He says, "They do essentially and specifically differ: the one is external, objectively set before the mind; the other is internal and mental. The former is liable to be utterly rejected with contempt, without any influence upon the conscience or life. The latter is received into the mind, and allowed by the author in this debate to have great influence on both, to raise conviction, and excite reformation and amendment of life, to the highest degree the unregenerate are capable of, by the common influence of the Holy Spirit; and, therefore, to argue from the one to the other, as if they were the same, the reasoning must needs be inconclusive."

Here are two differences mentioned, which he calls "essential and specifical." The first is, "one is external — the other is internal and mental." How this difference should make any odds in favor of the latter I cannot imagine. To suppose it does, is contrary to all reason and common sense, and to the words of Christ just quoted, as well as directly contrary to himself; for he allows that sins against the light and dictates of conscience are above all others aggravated, as has been observed; but this light is as "internal and mental" as any can be.

As to the other difference; if by being "received into mind," he means any thing inconsistent with rejecting and opposing the truth with contempt, and opposite to this, as it is plain that he does, in that he sets the one in opposition to the other; then, instead of proving any thing, he only begs the question in dispute, and supposes that this light reforms the sinner; so that, on the whole, his character is really mended, and that the mind, or heart, truly conforms and submits to it in its exercises. This is the only question in dispute; and if this must be taken for granted, the dispute is at an end. Mr. M. has really begged the question in dispute, through his whole book, by such representations as these, and those which are more grossly false, without ever attempting to prove that they are just. Let his book be stripped of this disguise, and most he says would appear in its true weakness. Let Mr. M., or any of his adherents, prove what he here and every where supposes and takes for granted, and the debate will be finished; for this is really the only thing in dispute. Mr. M. here says, I allow what he calls "internal light" to have great influence. It is true; but the influence I allow is directly contrary to that which he speaks of, viz., that it is the occasion of exciting direct opposition and enmity against God and Christ, and of a person's acting more against the light and dictates of his own conscience, in neglecting and obstinately refusing to do his Lord's will, of which he has a thousand times more clear and extensive knowledge than the ignorant, secure sinner. What Mr. M. means by internal light having "great influence on the conscience," I am at a loss. He does not mean that it enlightens the conscience; for this would be only saying that light in the conscience is light in the conscience: for internal light is the conscience enlightened. This, therefore, would be only saying nothing; or if it is saying something, it is nothing to his purpose. If, by "influence upon the conscience," he means any influence by which the heart or will does in any degree become pliable and submit to the truth and obey it, I am sure I do not, nor ever did, "allow" this; nor had he any right to take it for granted.

From this difference which he makes, he infers "that to argue from the one to the other as if they were the same, the reasoning must needs be inconclusive." It is granted they are not the same. There is a difference: I do not argue from the one to the other as if they were the same; but the argument is from the less to the greater. If this is the condemnation, if this is the great crime for which persons under the gospel will be condemned, that light is come into the world in an external revelation and they have hated and opposed it,

then they into whose minds and consciences this light is made to shine, so that they have a thousand times more knowledge of the revealed truth than others, and hate and oppose it more in proportion, are sinners above all others, and their condemnation will be proportionably greater.*

Having considered his general answer to show that these Scriptures are not to my purpose, which he often repeats, I shall take notice of some other things which he says with respect to each of these passages in order to evade the force of them.

He says of the first, "This is the condemnation," etc. "Not a word of an awakened, reformed sinner in the text and context; nothing of internal light or sensibility of conscience, or any of the effects that might imply it. Nay, the character here given of those spoken of, is quite the reverse of an awakened, reformed sinner. They are said to practise evil, i. e., so as the reformed sinner does not; and to shun the light, lest their evil deeds should be reproved, and they called to part with them."

I have just now shown that the strength of my argument from this text does not depend upon its having a direct and immediate reference to an awakened sinner; but on supposition an unawakened sinner only is meant, the argument from such a one to an awakened sinner is very strong, if the latter hates and opposes the light he has, as much, and more than the former. That he does not, Mr. M. here takes for granted; so that he begs the question again here, as he does from beginning to end.

But let us see how he proves that these words have no reference to an awakened sinner. He says, "The character here given of those spoken of is quite the reverse of the awakened, reformed sinner; they are said to practise evil, i. e., so as the reformed sinner does not." But of this he has not given the least proof unless it be in the repetition of the words *reformed sinner;* which is a very ambiguous phrase, as Mr. M. has used it here, and every where else. There is, indeed, no such reformed, unregenerate sinner as he here supposes, who cannot be said to do evil, and hate the light, and whose charac-

* But after all, I would observe that, if what Mr. M. says in this argument was well grounded, and the distinction he makes between sinning against and abusing external light, and internal and mental, had any reason in it and was to the purpose, (which I think appears to be far otherwise,) yet, before he has done he demolishes all he has said here, by declaring that they to whom our Savior spoke were awakened, reformed sinners. By this he has given up the whole of this pretended argument, having flatly contradicted what he so much insisted upon here; and in this he has the history of the evangelists on his side too. But of this, more hereafter.

ter is directly the reverse of this. There is no such unregenerate sinner mentioned in the Bible, from beginning to end; such a character is the invention of Mr. M. and a thousand others, in direct contradiction to the whole of divine revelation. It is directly contrary to this passage now under consideration. Our Savior speaks of two sorts of persons, of distinct and directly opposite characters, viz., they who do evil and hate the light, and they who love and practise the truth, whose deeds are wrought in God. And he so speaks of these as to exclude any middle character between these two extremes, and his words strongly imply that there can be no such person. With what face then can Mr. M. dress up an awakened sinner, so as not to belong to either of these characters, in which Christ evidently includes all mankind!

Besides, Christ is here speaking expressly of the condemnation that shall come on all unbelievers; so on all who do not know and love the truth; which appears from the foregoing words with which these are connected. "He that believeth not is condemned already. And this is the condemnation," etc. Mr. M., it seems, has found a set of persons who, though they do not believe on Christ, yet are dressed in such fine colors that they will not fall under this condemnation! They are certainly a sort of creatures which he who spoke these words knew nothing of; and it is most certain the Bible knows nothing about these poor, harmless, penitent, reformed, humble, obedient, unregenerate sinners, who do not hate the truth, nor do evil. Nor do any such exist in nature, as such a character is the most perfect contradiction, and necessarily destroys itself. They are the creatures of the imagination of a set of men in the Christian world, with which they have done infinite mischief to the cause of truth and religion.

I proceed to examine what he says on the next Scripture mentioned: "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin." I suppose our Savior in these words represents the sin the Jews were guilty of, in hating and rejecting him when he had come and spoken to them, and exhibited his character and the evidence of his divine mission in a clear and striking light, to be unspeakably greater than all their other sins could be, had he not thus come and spoken to them. This sin was so amazingly aggravated, that their other sins, however great in themselves, were light and as nothing, and not to be mentioned in comparison with this. I thought it hence followed, with undeniable evidence, that the awakened, convinced sinner, who, under the full blaze of light let into his mind and conscience, continued to hate and reject Jesus Christ, is unspeakably more guilty and vile than he was in a

state of ignorance and blindness when he did not see, and so could not hate and oppose Christ as he does now.

To this, Mr. M. objects two things. One is, that the light here spoken of as resisted is "merely external, and has no necessary relation to, or connection with, an awakened, reformed sinner."

This has been just now considered as his general objection to all the passages of Scripture now under consideration. And I hope it has been sufficiently shown how weak and groundless this is.

Another thing, he says, to show this text is not to my purpose is, that according to our Savior's own account, the Jews, of whom these words are spoken, "were in a state and temper of their minds, previous to their rejecting the gospel, more wicked than the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon, or even Sodom itself." This he thinks is evident in that he says, the latter "would have repented by the same means which the former rejected." Hence he infers, that if they were more wicked than the inhabitants of Sodom, antecedent to their rejecting Christ, this their wickedness could not, with any propriety, be said to be little or nothing compared with what they were now guilty of. Therefore, that this cannot be the meaning of our Savior.

To this I answer, in the first place, that it is by no means evident that when Christ speaks of these cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, as more guilty than Sodom, he has respect to the sins they were guilty of antecedent to his coming and preaching to them, but the contrary is most evident. Therefore his consequence has no foundation, so comes to nothing. But of this I shall have occasion to speak more particularly presently.

In the next place, I say, if what he supposes were true, his consequence does by no means follow. Though the Jews were worse than Sodom, antecedent to Christ's coming and preaching to them, it does not follow that they were not immensely more guilty, in consequence of the visit Christ made them, than they were before, though very guilty then. Their guilt might be vastly greater than that of Sodom, and yet they might be put into such circumstances, and have so much greater light, as to increase their guilt amazingly; so as that, in the comparison, their former guilt sinks, as it were, into nothing, as not to be mentioned with the latter. This is the very light in which this same thing is set in other passages of Scripture. "For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great

salvation, which at first began to be spoken by the Lord!" (Heb. ii. 2, 3.) Here we see the sin of rejecting Christ when he had come, is represented as beyond expression greater than any disobedience under the Mosaic dispensation, or before Christ came. The words, *How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation!* are very emphatical, and strongly express the unparalleled guilt which they contract, above all others, who reject Christ and the salvation offered by him; and are full as strong an expression as the words of Christ under consideration, taken in the sense I have put upon them. But this is expressed more strongly yet, if possible. "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh; for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven." (Heb. xii. 25.)

St. Paul, in order to set forth the excellence and glory of the gospel as far exceeding the glory of the legal dispensation under Moses, says, "For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth." (2 Cor. iii. 10.) This expression is exactly parallel with the words of Christ under consideration, taken in the sense I put upon them. And it is to be observed, that if the dispensation opened by Christ so much exceeded the former dispensation in glory that it may be said to have no glory in comparison with this, then it may be with as great propriety affirmed of the sins under these different dispensations, that sins under the former are no sins, have no guilt and criminalness, in comparison with sins under the latter. For despising and rebelling against the latter is more criminal than despising the former, in proportion to the greater glory of the latter.

The husbandmen, to whom the householder let out his vineyard, were very criminal in abusing the servants he sent to them to receive his due of the fruit, and proceeding to kill some of them. But how much more criminal and guilty were they in seizing and putting to death his only son, when he was sent to them! This, as it were, swallowed up all their former crimes, so that they are hardly to be mentioned in comparison with this. In what words could the greatness of this crime be better represented than by such an expression as this: "If he had not sent his only son, they had not had sin; their guilt would have been little or nothing compared with what it is now; for now they have seen, and murdered his only son." It is common to represent the greatness of a crime by saying, Such or such a sin is nothing to this; or all the wickedness he was guilty of before is nothing to this. And is

not Christ's expression exactly parallel to this? How, then, can we be at a loss about the meaning of it?

This does, indeed, set Jesus Christ in a very grand light; that all the sins in the world should be nothing to that of rejecting and hating him when he comes in person, and speaks and offers himself. It is impossible that they who have as low and mean notions of him, and as high ones of themselves as the Jews had, should understand them. No wonder, then, if all such join with Mr. M., and say, "Since this cannot be the meaning, another must be sought."

When we consider the high and grand character of Jesus Christ the Son of God, his amazing condescension and grace in becoming incarnate and living among the Jews, their high expectations and desires of the coming of the Messiah, the excellence and amiableness of his character, how abundant, clear, and plain his public instructions were, and what full, bright, and awakening evidence he gave by his stupendous works, that he was indeed the Son of God; I say, when we well consider all this, and much more that might be mentioned, the crime of hating and rejecting him, in those circumstances, will, I am confident, rise so high in our view, that there will appear no difficulty in understanding the words under consideration in the sense I have put upon them; and it will, I doubt not, appear, that to say that this crime does not rise so high above all others as to justify such an expression, thus understood, and on this ground to seek another meaning, is very dishonorable to Jesus Christ.

In this light, therefore, I think I have good ground to look on what Mr. M. has said here, especially if we consider what is the meaning which he has "sought" and found. This I will give in his own words: "And since this cannot be the meaning, (i. e., the meaning I had put upon the words,) another must be sought, which is plainly this, viz., they had not had that sin of rejecting the clear light of the evidence of the divine mission of Christ, and so of the truth of the gospel." That is, if Christ had not come and given them opportunity to reject him, they would not have been guilty of rejecting him. This is much the same as if he had said, "If they had not been guilty of this sin, they would not in fact have been guilty of it." Who can think that our divine Teacher, who never spoke a word but to some good purpose, took pains repeatedly to inculcate this, which every one knew without his mentioning it; and if they did not, it is a matter of no importance; so that to assert it is but mere trifling. Who, I say, can imagine this? If Mr. M. will find another such instance in the whole Bible, or in any author of tolerable sense, he may be excused.

He was surely driven to a hard shift, that when he sought a meaning to these words, he could find no better, if he rejected that which I had given.

But he goes on to say, "They, indeed, did it in their hearts, but it lay concealed, hid under the cloak of high pretensions to sanctity; but when they acted it out, the cloak fell off, and their wickedness appeared to all the world. This acting out the wickedness of their hearts, we readily grant, was an aggravation of their sin. But how comes it to pass that all their sinfulness of heart and life," (i. e., of the inhabitants of Chorazin, etc.,) "whereby they were more vile than the idolatrous heathen, and most abominable Sodomites, is little or nothing compared with acting it out in this particular? Is the fountain nothing to the streams? The cause nothing to the effect? Is not this to invert the known and established rules of reasoning?"

Here he speaks of these Jews as covering all their wickedness under the cloak of high pretensions to sanctity, and in the next breath speaks of their wickedness of life. So here are a set of men who are guilty of great sinfulness of life, i. e., outward, open wickedness, and yet at the same time hide all their wickedness of heart under high pretensions to sanctity. A strange sort of people, indeed! It is to be also remembered that he elsewhere speaks of these very persons as "reformed sinners, who were awakened, brought to consider, and in a measure to amend their lives." What, then, does he here mean by sinfulness of life? But if they were never so sinful in their lives, to what purpose is it mentioned here, when he is speaking only of sinfulness of heart, of the "fountain," not of the "streams"? Is sinfulness of life the fountain, not the streams; the cause, and not the effect?

As to his two questions here, the first has been answered already. Let these be as sinful in heart and life as Mr. M. supposes, so that they were more vile than the most abominable Sodomites, antecedent to their having opportunity to sin against, hate, and reject Christ, yet their acting out the wickedness of their hearts in this particular way, had unspeakably more guilt and vileness in it than all their other sins put together. To say the contrary, is to speak dishonorably of Christ, and contrary to what he has said not only here, but elsewhere, and to other passages of Scripture, as has been shown.

As to the other question, "Is the fountain nothing to the streams?" etc., I answer, I see not what relation this question has to that which is now in dispute. What Christ speaks of in the words before us are the exercises and exertions of wickedness in hating and rejecting him; and these he says are so greatly aggravated, that all the exercises and acts of wicked-

ness which they would or could be guilty of, had he not come and spoken to them, had been light, and as nothing, compared with these. So that what is here said has no relation to wickedness of heart, considered as distinct from all exercises of every kind, and antecedent to such, if there is indeed any such wickedness of heart in nature. In a word, if by the "fountain" he means that sinfulness of heart and life whereby the Jews were more vile than the idolatrous heathen, then by fountain and streams, cause and effect, he means the same thing, or rather has no meaning at all. Their sinfulness of heart and life by which they hated and opposed Christ, was no more the streams from the fountain than that wickedness of heart and life by which they were more vile than the idolatrous heathen; and the former was as much the fountain and cause as the latter. But if by fountain and cause here Mr. M. means the wickedness of the heart distinct from all exercises, and antecedent to them, his question is quite foreign to the matter under consideration; as the words of Christ have no relation to this, but to sinful exercises of heart in hating the Father and him. This, he says, was such a high degree of wickedness that all sins they could have been guilty of were as nothing to this.

His next words are, "But what increases my surprise is, that in the passages above quoted from the author he seems to argue that the sinner's being restrained from acting out the wickedness of the heart in overt acts is as nothing; but what he is in his heart is all. Whatever particular ways of sin he has forsaken, yet on the whole he is more vile. And now, all the wickedness of the heart whereby the sinner is disposed to the act, if occasion offers, is little or nothing, if the overt act is restrained. Does the tables being turned really change the nature of things?"

Reply. Mr. M. here puts the charge upon himself, and is the sole cause of increasing his own surprise, and of the contradiction he would fasten upon me, by using the words *overt acts*, in an indeterminate, confused manner, and so as to mean one thing in one sentence, and quite another in the next. If, by overt acts, are meant external acts of sin, in distinction from the voluntary exercises of the heart, I have said that whatever overt acts the sinner is restrained from, he may, notwithstanding, be more guilty and vile in acting out the wickedness of his heart, in hating and opposing Christ, under great light and conviction of conscience, than he was when guilty of these overt acts in a state of ignorance and security. In this sense Mr. M. uses these words in the first sentence, unless he abuses me, and himself too. But where is the inconsistency

with this, in representing the great sin of the Jews as consisting in hating and opposing Jesus Christ, so that all their overt acts of sin that they had been guilty of, or could be without this, were as nothing to it? Is not this perfectly consistent? Every reader who has sense and attention enough to read two plain sentences, must know it is. But Mr. M. has used the words "overt act," in the last sentence, in quite another sense, as meaning all the exercises of the mind whatever, in distinction from the dormant principles of the heart, antecedent to all thought, motion, or exercise, "whereby the sinner is disposed to act, if occasion offers." Now I have said nothing about this through the whole section he is remarking upon. I speak of no wickedness of heart but what consists in thought and voluntary exercise, or the neglect of proper exercise when occasion offers; and therefore make no comparison between the one and the other. It is Mr. M., therefore, that has "turned the tables," and confused and surprised himself and his reader with his own mistake and inaccuracy.

Before I leave this passage I would observe, that Mr. M., by representing the streams as nothing to the fountain,— meaning by streams, overt acts of sin,— has in a great measure spoiled his reformed sinner, about whom he says so much, laying a mighty stress upon his external reformation, as being sufficient to counterbalance all the greater guilt he contracts by his opposition of heart to immensely more light and conviction than he had. This external reformation now dwindles into little or nothing compared with the fountain of corruption that remains as great and with as much strength as ever. If he had kept this in view every where, we should not have heard so much of his poor, trembling, reformed sinner; nor so much said in his favor, how opposite soever is his heart to Jesus Christ and the gospel.

I come now to consider the other passage of Scripture which I referred to in support of what I had advanced. It is this: "Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not. Woe unto thee, Chorazin; woe unto thee, Bethsaida; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell; for if the mighty works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee."

Mr. M. says, Christ has respect here only to the wickedness and hardness of heart the inhabitants of these cities were found guilty of antecedent to his preaching and working miracles among them, by which they had rendered themselves harder and more unimpressible by these powerful means than the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon were. This he thinks to be certain from Christ's telling them that, if the same means had been used with the latter, they would have repented; and he hence concludes, also, that the repentance here spoken of, for the neglect of which he upbraids these cities, and which he says the Tyrians and Sidonians would have been brought to by these means, was not true repentance, or a repentance which implies any real love to God and hatred of sin, and turning of the heart from it, but what he calls "a legal repentance, or repentance on natural principles." He thinks this is certain, "seeing our blessed Savior well knew that neither these means which they enjoyed, nor any other means, could ever bring them to a saving repentance, without an almighty power exerted in giving a new heart." He, therefore, gives the sense of this passage in the following words: "As if Christ had said, you have, by your own wickedness, wasted natural conscience, sinned away your moral sense, and rendered yourselves more unimpressible by the same motives and arguments to repentance, set in the same advantageous light, than the idolatrous Tyrians and Sidonians; and, therefore, on that single account, your state is more wicked than theirs, and you are justly exposed to a more aggravated condemnation in the day of judgment than they."

Upon this, I take leave to observe the following things:—

1. It is strange and unaccountable indeed, if Christ here sharply reproves the inhabitants of these cities for not repenting with a legal repentance, which implies in it no true regard to his character or opposition of heart to sin, and says not a word to them for their not coming to that repentance which John Baptist, his harbinger, and he himself, from the beginning of his ministry, had been inculcating and calling them to. John Baptist had sounded an alarm among them all, and loudly preached "repentance for the remission of sins." This was certainly saving repentance; and when John was put in prison, "Jesus came into Galilee (to these very cities) preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe the gospel." (Mark i. 14, 15.) Christ had been calling and urging them to true repentance in all his teaching, and by all his miracles; and it is perfectly unaccountable and astonishing, if he now drops this demand, and says not a word

to them by way of reproof for not hearkening to his calls and demands, and to what was the language of all his mighty works; but reproves and upbraids them severely for something else, which he never expressly mentioned before, or called them to, but only as it is implied in true repentance, and which implies in it no true regard and obedience to him, and leaves them as really in a state of misery and ruin as ever.

2. The reason which Mr. M. gives why our Savior cannot mean saving repentance, is really as much of a reason why he cannot mean legal repentance; for he holds that this is not effected merely by means, but the influences of the Spirit of God are as necessary to bring men to legal repentance as they are to bring them to saving repentance; and he represents that a very dangerous and hurtful doctrine that teaches that legal repentance is not produced by the Spirit of God. Mr. M. must either espouse this new divinity, or his argument will prove that Christ did not mean legal repentance; for according to his own doctrine, "our blessed Savior infinitely well knew, that neither these means they enjoyed, nor any other means, could ever bring them to" legal repentance "without an almighty power exerted" by the common influences of the Spirit of God, in a work of awakening and conviction. His argument, therefore, is good for nothing, or rather much worse than nothing, because it proves too much; and he is guilty of gross self-contradiction in using it as he does.

3. The whole of what he says here is in direct contradiction to the truth of the case, according to the history the evangelists give, and contrary to what he asserts elsewhere. He, speaking of what Christ says of the unclean spirit, which is cast out and afterwards returns and finds the house swept and garnished, etc., (Matt. xii. 43–45,) observes, "By the house empty, swept, and garnished, is represented the state of an awakened, reformed sinner when wickedness as to the actings of it is restrained, the unclean spirit gone out. This is applied to the Jewish nation: Even so shall it be also with this wicked generation, i. e., they who were awakened, brought to consider, and in a measure amend their lives by the preaching of John Baptist, Christ and his apostles, and by the mighty works done among them." Here you see these very persons are awakened and reformed, and brought to a legal repentance by the preaching of John Baptist, Christ and his apostles, and by the mighty works done among them, who, he says in the passage under consideration, were not awakened, and did not reform by all this preaching, and these mighty works; and that this is the very thing of which Christ upbraids them, as that in which they appeared to be worse than the inhabitants of Tyre

and Sidon. What is now become of his argument to prove that the Jews were worse than the Sodomites "on this single account," that they were not brought to legal repentance by Christ's preaching? He has quite confuted it himself, by declaring this was not true of them, but that they did in fact repent; and in this he is supported by the history the evangelists give of the matter.

He, therefore, has not hit on the true meaning of this passage; and "another must be sought." But I proceed to observe, —

4. If the sense which he has put upon this passage should be allowed to be true, however inconsistent it is with the evangelists, and with himself, yet it stands full to the purpose for which I quoted it, viz., to prove that they are the most guilty and vile who enjoy the most light, and rebel against it. For if these Jews were worse than Sodom antecedent to Christ coming among them, their greater guilt did not consist in their open profligacy and wickedness, for in this Sodom doubtless exceeded them, but in their abuse of greater light and advantages, and by this means bringing themselves into a more guilty, hardened state.

But as the case stands, and as Mr. M. says it in fact was, it is exactly to my purpose. Here is an instance of sinners "who were awakened, brought to consider and to amend their lives," who are declared by Christ himself to be more guilty and vile than the abandoned profligates of Sodom, purely because they remained impenitent and rejected him, under all their awakenings, convictions, and external reformations.

The inhabitants of these cities had been for a long time thoroughly reformed from idolatry, to which their fathers were so much given, and were punctual and zealous in attending the instituted duties of worship and religion. They did not practise the abominable vices of Sodom. And they had been greatly alarmed and awakened, and reformed in their external conduct, by the preaching of John. They flocked to him in crowds, and were baptized, confessing their sins, and earnestly asking the important question, "What shall we do?" And, when Christ came to preach among them, they flocked to him from all quarters, and heard with great attention, admiration, and applause. "And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee, and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all." (Luke iv. 14, 15.)

But, notwithstanding all this, they did with one consent reject the message that Christ brought to them, and refused to repent and believe the gospel. And for this impenitence and

unbelief, persisted in, under all this light, awakening, conviction, and reformation, and while these mighty works were wrought in their sight; for this, I say, Christ upbraids them, and tells them that, "on this single account," notwithstanding all their convictions, fears, and reformations, and attending on his preaching with affection, admiration, and applause, they were worse, more guilty and vile than open, gross idolaters, or even Sodom itself. And not "that they had, by their own wickedness, wasted natural conscience, sinned away their moral sense, and rendered themselves more unimpressible by the same motives and arguments to repentance, set in the same advantageous light, than the idolatrous Tyrians and Sidonians."

This saying of our Lord was doubtless very shocking, offensive, and provoking to the inhabitants of these cities; nothing could be more so, especially to the scribes and Pharisees, and to every one who had as favorable an opinion of the "awakened, reformed sinner," who yet persists in impenitence, and obstinately rejects Jesus Christ, as Mr. M. has. And no wonder if on this occasion they mentioned all the dreadful absurdities of this principle, and uttered all the exclamations that are found in Mr. M.'s book, or something like them. "Strange absurdity this! Strange divinity, indeed! Nor is it in our power to doubt, that the grand enemy of the Messiah and precious souls put his hearty amen to it. Thrice amazing!"

After all, I cannot think the inhabitants of Capernaum came up to the character of the awakened, convinced sinner of which I spake. They had not that degree of light, and were not so fully convinced in their consciences that Jesus was the Christ, nor did they so clearly see their inexcusableness in rejecting him, and the dreadful consequences to them, etc., as the awakened sinner does, of whom I speak. But, as such a sinner is as really an impenitent as they were, and does as fully reject Jesus Christ as they did, and that under immensely greater light and conviction of conscience than they had, how much more guilty is he than the Sodomites, or even than the inhabitants of Capernaum, who were themselves so much worse than those of Sodom!

When our Savior says to Chorazin and Bethsaida, "If the mighty works which have been done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes," I suppose we are not to understand him as asserting that this would certainly have been the effect of such means being used with the inhabitants of these cities, as if he spake in the character of the omniscient God, as certainly knowing what in all cases would be. But he is here to be

considered as speaking as a man, (and he was no more than a man in their view to whom he spake,) and after the manner of men, viewing and judging of this matter according to human appearance and probability. As if he he had said, "Who could have thought that you would not repent and believe the gospel, before whose eyes such mighty works have been done for your conviction. If such things had been done among men of the worst character, even the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon, surely they would have repented immediately. It would be natural to expect, and be confident that this would be the effect." If the words are understood in this sense, they will be very agreeable to some other passages in the Bible. "For he said, surely they are my people, children that will not lie: so he was their Savior." (Isa. lxiii. 8.) Here God is represented as putting confidence in his people, that they would be faithful to him, according to their profession, vows, and engagements; and so is represented as speaking only after the manner of men; for as the omniscient God, he knew they did lie, and would break all their promises. The following passage, I think, is exactly parallel to this under consideration: "For thou art not sent to a people of a strange speech, and of a hard language, but to the house of Israel; not to many people of a strange speech and a hard language, whose words thou canst not understand; surely, had I sent thee to them they would have hearkened unto thee." (Ezek. iii. 5, 6.)

Christ's design was to represent to them their folly and obstinacy in a way that was suited to their conviction, and to stop their mouths. And what was better suited to do it, than to observe to them the confidence any one would have, before the trial, that those who, in their view were the worst of men, and whom they held in the highest contempt and abhorrence, would have been brought to the deepest repentance, by the same means under which they had continued obstinately impenitent?

Before I leave this passage, I would observe, that our Savior does not ground his assertion that it should be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for the inhabitants of these Jewish cities, upon this — that the former would have repented had the mighty works been done in them which were done among the latter. This Mr. M. takes for granted in all he says, but, I think, without any reason. If this had been the case, the word would have been, "Therefore I say unto you it shall be more tolerable," etc., and not "But I say unto you," etc. Christ tells them, that if the same means had been used with these wicked cities, which these Jews did most abominate and contemn, that had been used with them, any

one would be confident they would have repented, as best suited to strike conviction into their minds, and make them reflect on their own amazing unreasonableness and obstinacy. And then goes on to say, "But I say unto you," etc. As if he had said, "But, be this as it will, whether they would have repented or not, I have one thing to say to you which you may depend upon as infallibly certain; however abominably vile and wicked you think these cities to be, you are much more guilty than they, and they shall have a lighter punishment than you, when every thing shall be adjusted according to the truth."

But let it be remembered that whether I have given the true sense or not, it does not affect the matter in dispute between Mr. M. and me; for, be this as it will, it is certain the sense he has given, in order to oppose me, cannot be right; which I conclude has been sufficiently proved.

The last text mentioned must now be attended to. "The gospel is a savor of death unto death, in them that perish."

I referred to this Scripture to prove that all means used with sinners, all light and advantages they have had, and therefore all light and conviction of conscience, if they continue impenitent and perish, will turn against them and aggravate their condemnation; and said, "consequently the more light and conviction men have, the more their attention is awakened to the things of the gospel; and the more means they attend upon, and are used with them, while they continue obstinately to oppose light and truth and reject the offers of the gospel, the more guilty and vile, and the greater criminals are they in God's sight." Before I proceed, I beg leave to take notice, that Mr. M., when he quotes these words, having transcribed the following, "While they continue obstinately to oppose light and truth, and reject the offers of the gospel," stops here, and adds, "i. e., while they continue unregenerate, as the author explains himself." This he seems to add out of his great tenderness to the awakened, unregenerate sinner, to qualify my words, as if they set the sinner in too bad a light, and as if to be barely unregenerate was a more innocent, harmless character than these words represented. He puts in this softening expression, as he seems to think it, whenever he has occasion to quote the words in which I represent the state and exercises of the unregenerate, even under the highest awakenings and convictions. A plain evidence this, among a hundred others, that he does not think the awakened, unregenerate sinner does obstinately reject the offers of the gospel. But why then did he not speak this out plainly, and expressly oppose me on this foot, which is really the turning point, and the only dispute between us? He

might then, perhaps, have been more consistent with himself, whether he had gained his point or no.

But let us attend to what he observes upon this passage of Scripture to show that it is not to my purpose. This is in the following words: "Were it never so fully conceded that those that perish from under the external light of the gospel do thereby fall under a more aggravated condemnation, yet this would be nothing to the author's purpose, because this may be the case with multitudes, that they reject the external light of the evidence of the truth of the gospel with scorn and derision, without ever being awakened or reformed by it; so the gospel may be a savor of death unto death, unto thousands that never were one of them a proper subject of this debate, because never awakened to reformation and amendment of life."

This passage is somewhat dark to me, I own; but if I have understood it, the meaning is this: though it is granted that the gospel becomes a savor of death unto them that perish from under it, yet it does not follow that it is so to them who are awakened and reformed; because this may be true of thousands under the gospel, who do reject it with scorn. If any thing is proved by this, I think it is, that the awakened and reformed do not any of them perish; so these words have no relation to them, but only to those who reject the gospel with scorn. They, indeed, perish, and the gospel is a means of aggravating their condemnation. If any of the awakened and reformed perish, then the gospel is a savor of death unto death unto them; for it is so to all that perish, be they awakened and reformed or not.

Indeed, I do not wonder if Mr. M. thinks the awakened, humbled, reformed, unregenerate sinner, who honestly attempts to be obedient, and lies at the foot of sovereign mercy as his only hope, does never perish, though he allows there are no promises made to such. Our Savior divides all under the gospel into those who do evil and hate the light, and consequently shall fall under an aggravated condemnation; and those who love and obey the truth, and so shall be saved. Mr. M. insists upon it that his awakened, reformed sinner does not belong to the former class, as has been observed; therefore will not be condemned. What he says here is of the same tenor. St. Paul divides all into them that shall perish, and those who shall be saved; and Mr. M. says, the awakened, reformed sinner is not to be ranked among the former, therefore shall be saved.

I shall finish this section when I have taken notice of one passage more under this head. Mr. M. says, "Another mis-

taken way in which the author argues his point, as it appears to me, is determining the degree of man's wickedness, merely from the degree of light sinned against, without any regard had to the degree of the strength of his bias to sin."

I cannot say how this happened to appear to Mr. M. However, I think it did not "appear to him" from any thing that I have said. To illustrate this remark, he supposes two persons with different degrees of bias to sin, under the same degree of light; and concludes that he who has the strongest bias or inclination to sin is the greatest sinner. This is granted; but I have said nothing that relates to such a case. I am speaking of the same sinner, having different degrees of light at different times; in which there is no room for the supposition of different degrees of bias, unless we suppose that his bias to sin increases as the light of his conscience does. And this supposition is so far from rendering my argument inconclusive, that it greatly strengthens it. And if I any where speak of two sinners, representing him as the greatest who has the most light, it is supposed that their natural powers, advantages, and bias to sin are in all other respects equal.

SECTION V.

In which several Things which Mr. Mills says in Favor of the Negative are examined.

Mr. Mills has mentioned several things which he intends as arguments against what I have advanced, though they are not formally proposed as such; which, as they are, perhaps, as weighty as any he has offered, and will probably have more influence on the minds of many of his readers to prejudice them against me and the doctrine I have advanced than all he has said in his book besides, it seems necessary in the first place to consider them.

One argument of this kind, which he holds up to view, and harps upon abundantly from the beginning to the end of his piece, is, that the doctrine I advance is *new*. He makes his first attack upon me with this weapon. In his first sentence, after he has, in his own words, stated the doctrine he means to oppose, he has these words: "I must say, the divinity here exhibited appears to me strange and new; never before advanced in the Christian world, by any divine of tolerable sense and reputation, so far as my acquaintance reacheth." And as he thus begins, he holds up the cry of *new divinity* to the end of his book.

This has, indeed, been often objected to doctrines that have been advanced, and many are so weak and foolish as to be ready to reject any thing that is proposed, which is to them strange and new; because *new*, erroneous, and wrong, are with them synonymous words. This was objected against Christ and his apostles. This was a grand objection against the reformation from popery. And it is now a sufficient objection against any doctrine advanced by any divine in the church of Rome, that it is *new*, — never before advanced by any of the fathers. And this has always been the cry, whenever there has been any attempt to bring on a reformation in doctrine or manners, — "These are new things, therefore wrong, and not to be received." Mr. M. himself has not forgotten, I conclude, that he has been often, in a way of reproach, called a *new light.* And as he has had so much to teach him what influence this now has with too many, and must be sensible that it is quite sufficient to set them against a man and his doctrine, to tell them he has published strange and new divinity, his making use of it as he has done is not only very weak, but is quite unjustifiable and wrong. For this is in a high degree imposing on such, and confirming them in a prejudice which every public teacher ought to guard against and endeavor to eradicate to the utmost of his power, as it can never do any real good, and has proved infinitely mischievous in ten thousand instances, and will always be improved against the discovery of new truth, and the increase of light and knowledge in the church of Christ, which is so much predicted in Scripture, and is so greatly to be desired. And Mr. M. is yet more inexcusable and culpable if he has raised and kept up this cry of *new divinity* with a design to avail himself of this too common prejudice among mankind, the more effectually to run down and raise the popular cry against the man and the doctrine which he had undertaken to oppose.

Mr. M., perhaps, thinks he has given sufficient caution on this head, in that when he speaks of my doctrine as "quite new," he adds, "and therefore requires the greater caution not to admit of other than clear and demonstrative Scripture evidence and proof for the confirmation of it." But what he has asserted here is directly contrary to truth and all reason. We ought always to exercise so much caution as never to admit any doctrine as true without good evidence; and all doctrines proposed to us as true, whether old or new, are to be carefully examined and tried in the light of Scripture, and not to be received unless we judge them supported by that unerring rule; and in this inquiry and examination, their being old or new ought not to come into consideration, so as to

have the least weight with us, on one side or the other. It is no argument at all that a doctrine is true, because it has been long received as such; nor is it the least evidence that a doctrine is not agreeable to Scripture, that it is "quite new, and never before advanced." And, therefore, both old and new are to be examined with equal caution, and the latter to be as readily admitted as the former, if it be equally agreeable to Scripture. And if any one uses greater caution in examining and admitting one or the other, either because it is new or because it is old, he so far is governed by unreasonable prejudice. The word *new* ought not to be mentioned in such an inquiry. Therefore, Mr. M. cannot be justified in any thing he has said on this head; but is answerable for all the prejudice he has by this means excited in the minds of any against the author and doctrine he opposes, and for all the odium this outcry has raised.

The church has yet been in its infant state as to knowledge. The Bible is in no measure understood as it will be, when it shall be properly and thoroughly attended to. Many things which have been held for truth by long prescription will be exploded, and new truths will rise into view. "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." "Every scribe which is instructed into the kingdom of heaven, is like a man that is a householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old." And shall any one of these professed scribes raise a cry against another merely because he brings forth new divinity?

But this charge and outcry will appear worse, and more injurious still, if the fact is not true, and the doctrine I have advanced is indeed not new divinity, but has been often taught, though not just in my words, or in so express and particular a manner as I have done, by many old and noted divines. They have all asserted it in effect who have taught that the sum of all sin lies in the exercises of the heart, and that unbelief, or rejection of Jesus Christ, is beyond comparison the greatest sin that men can be guilty of; and that the awakened, convinced sinner does reject Christ with as great strength and obstinacy of heart as ever, under all his light and conviction, which does amazingly aggravate his sin. Was it a matter of importance enough to call for it, a volume of collections to this purpose, from many eminent divines that have been long dead, might be published. But this would be labor in vain, as it would not be the least evidence that the doctrine I have published is true, or afford the least degree of reason why it should be received with less caution than if it was in direct opposition to all the divines that ever lived. However, for M. M.'s satisfac-

tion, and to calm his mind, which has been so greatly agitated and troubled about this "strange, new divinity," which appeared to him "too strange to be true," I will make a quotation or two from one who I trust he will own was a "divine of tolerable sense and reputation." It is no less or later a divine than Dr. Owen.

He, speaking of awakened, convinced, reformed sinners, under a work of the law, says, "The spring of sin is not dried up, only the streams of it are turned another way. It may be the man is fallen upon other more secret, or more spiritual sins; or if he be beat off from them also, the whole strength of lust and sin will take up its residence in self-righteousness, and pour out thereby as filthy streams as in any other way whatever." Again, speaking of endeavors of the unregenerate to mortify sin by prayers, fasting, etc., he says, "Sin is not mortified; no, nor the power of it weakened; but what it loseth in sensual, in carnal pleasures, it takes up with great advantage in blindness, darkness, superstition, self-righteousness, foul pride, contempt of the gospel, and the righteousness of it, and reigns no less than in the most profligate sinners in the world."

To this may be added the opinion of some later divines. President Edwards says, "It is very manifest by Scripture and reason, that for men to live in enmity against God and Christ, and in wilful unbelief and rejection of Christ, (as the Scriptures teach is the case with all unsanctified men under the gospel,) is to live in some of the most heinous kinds of wickedness, as is allowed by all Calvinistic divines in general, and by Mr. Stoddard in particular, who says, 'You cannot anger God more by any thing than by continuing in the neglect of Christ. This is the great controversy God has with sinners; not that they have been guilty of these and those particular transgressions, but that they abide in the rejection of the gospel.'" And again he says, "The great sin that God is angry with you for, is unbelief. Despising the gospel is the great, provoking sin." President Edwards says, moreover, "The truth is, that as long as men reject Christ, and do not savingly believe on him, however they may be awakened, and however strict, and conscientious, and laborious they may be in religion, they have the wrath of God abiding on them, and they are his enemies, and the children of the devil; and they are then especially provoking to God, under those terrors, that they stand it out against Christ, and will not accept an offered Savior, though they see so much need of him."

Here are not only two of the most noted divines not against me, but expressly on my side of the question, but Calvinistic

divines in general, so far as President Edwards's judgment is to be relied upon with respect to this fact. I have transcribed this partly to enlarge Mr. M.'s acquaintance, that he may no longer be able to say the divinity I have exhibited was "never before advanced in the Christian world by any divine of tolerable sense and reputation, so far as my acquaintance reacheth."

After what I have said above it will perhaps be needless to observe, that I do not make these quotations because I would not be thought to have published any thing new. I now declare I had much rather publish *new* divinity than any other. And the more of this the better, if it be but true. Nor do I think any doctrine can be "too strange to be true." I should think it hardly worth while to write if I had nothing new to say. And if I am so unhappy as to live in an age in which I must be condemned merely because I bring certain strange things to their ears, I will appeal from them, and from Mr. M. in particular, to the happy people who shall live in the last days, who will be thankful to every one who has cast in his mite towards the overthrow of error, however long established, and the discovery of truth, however new and overlooked by all generations before; and will look on him as an enemy to the church and to mankind who has used his influence to stifle and suppress every or any new truth, because he had never heard or thought of it before.

Another argument against me is, that the doctrine I have advanced is not only new, but directly contrary to the opinion of many eminent fathers and divines; and among the rest, "the late President Edwards, who will," says Mr. M., "serve, I suppose, instead of many with our author."

Answer. This argument appears to me of no more weight than the former. The opinion of no man or body of men, however great and renowned in their day, ought to have the least weight with us in our inquiries after the truths of the gospel. He who pays the least regard to this, or is in any degree influenced by it, gives himself up to a very uncertain, fallible guide; and if he is not led wrong, but believes what is real truth, merely upon the credit and testimony of others, it will be of no more saving advantage to him than if it was not true; for such implicit faith is no better than no faith at all. Besides, it is a great abuse of any divine who is dead, to rely upon him or quote him as an authority, who knew himself to be fallible, and would be very sorry to have his mistakes received as truth, merely because he was so unhappy as to publish them.

He, therefore, may be justly censured who quotes any father, or number of fathers, as an authority, or of the least weight to support what he holds, or run down what he opposes. It is

much worse than childish trifling; it is an abuse of the public, and tends to uphold people in that which they are very prone to, and has proved pernicious to thousands, viz., relying on the opinion of others, especially those who have had the character of sound and great divines, without examining for themselves. But,—

2. It does not appear evident to me that the divines Mr. M. has quoted against me do say any thing really contrary to what I have advanced. If it is an abuse to quote an author as an authority to support or oppose any doctrine, it is yet much more injurious to misunderstand them, and produce them to oppose a doctrine which they never meant to oppose. Therefore, though the matter in dispute between Mr. M. and me is not in the least degree to be determined by them, and it is really no matter, in this view, on which side of the question they are, yet it is but a piece of justice to them to remove the misrepresentation when their words are quoted in a sense which they never meant.

Mr. M.'s quotation from the Westminster and Savoy confessions is in the following words: "Works done by unregenerate men, although, for the matter of them, they may be things which God commands, and of good use both to themselves and others; yet, because they proceed not from a heart purified by faith, nor are done in a right manner, according to the word, nor to a right end, the glory of God, they are, therefore, sinful, and cannot please God, or make man meet to receive grace from God; and yet their neglect of them is more sinful and displeasing to God."

Mr. M. says, "This last clause, taken in a compound sense, is denied by Mr. Hopkins." I confess I know not what sense that is which he here calls a compound sense, unless it be a sense compounded of the author's sense and Mr. M.'s. It does not appear, I think, that this clause, taken according to common sense, has ever been denied by me.

All they say is, that the practice of these things which are externally right, is less sinful than the neglect of them would be, other things being equal; and I say nothing contrary to this. They do not say that he is the least sinner, less guilty and vile in all cases and in every instance, who attends on those external things, than he might be in the neglect of them. Nor is this true. A person may put on all external sobriety and religion out of enmity to Christianity, and with a design to put himself under advantage thereby to overthrow it more effectually. In this case, I suppose all will grant he is as sinful and vile as if he had lived in the neglect of these things. If a person believes in his conscience it is wrong and very

sinful for him to attend the externals of religion, and that God forbids him to do it, his doing these things in this case would be more sinful in him than the neglect of them. The passage under consideration (Mr. M. will grant) has no respect to such instances as these; so affirms nothing about them. But it has as much respect to these as to the case I have stated in my section on means. I state a particular case, in which I say the unregenerate sinner is more guilty and vile, even though he reforms all external ways of sin, and performs all external duty, than he was when he did not so; at the same time I expressly assert that his greater sinfulness does not consist in his reformation of external sins, but in something else, quite independent of this. Is this to assert, attendance on these externals is not in itself considered, other things being equal, less sinful? Surely, no; nor any thing like it. Therefore, I do not contradict what the assembly of divines here assert. I do not say that the awakened, convinced sinner would not be more guilty in continuing in external wickedness and the neglect of external religion than he is in his external reformations, but that he is now more guilty and vile, all things considered, than he was in a state of ignorance and security, whatever alteration there is in his external conduct. How Mr. M. came to think I had denied what is asserted in the passage quoted, I cannot tell. Perhaps he will unfold the matter when he comes to explain his compound sense; until this shall be done, I must say, "No consequence, and wait for light."

Before I leave this passage I would just observe, that though it contains nothing in opposition to what I have asserted, Mr. M. has advanced things in his book which I think are directly contrary to it. Here it is said, "They" (i. e., works done by unregenerate men) "are sinful, and cannot please God." But Mr. M., speaking of Ahab, says, the Lord took a favorable notice of his doings; and he speaks of God's express approbation of Jehu, and the congregation of Israel in the wilderness for what they did while unregenerate. Surely, to say that the doings and works of the unregenerate cannot please God, and to say that God takes a favorable notice of them, and approves of them, are as contrary and opposite propositions as any can be. To say that God approves of that with which he is not, and cannot be pleased, is a flat contradiction, and is just the same as to say, God cannot be pleased with that with which he actually is pleased.

In this passage it is also said, that the works and attainments of the unregenerate do not make a man meet to receive grace from God. Mr. M., in direct opposition to this, has labored through several pages to prove that the unregenerate do,

by their exercises and works, get nearer to true grace or holiness, or in the state of their mind nearer to that of good men.

I do not mention Mr. M.'s opposition to "the testimony of so many Calvinistic divines" as any evidence that he is not right. That he has herein grossly erred from the truth, I trust will appear evident enough before I have done; though his contradicting these divines is no evidence against him at all. I observe this only to show his self-contradiction, in that he with high approbation quotes a passage as being directly against me, and then repeatedly contradicts it himself; so that when the matter comes to be examined, it stands not at all against me, but directly against himself.

We will now attend to what he has quoted from President Edwards. He says, "He is so express to the point as if he had wrote on purpose to confute the doctrine I am opposing." His words are, "The exercise of natural conscience is such and such degrees, wherein appears such a measure of awakening or sensibility of conscience, though it be not of the nature of real positive virtue, or true moral goodness, yet has a negative moral goodness, because in the present state of things, it is an evidence of the absence of that higher degree of wickedness which causes great insensibility, or stupidity of conscience."

That the author in these words has no respect to the doctrine Mr. M. is opposing, and much less says any thing on purpose to confute it, will be evident, if the following things are well considered: —

1. He is not here speaking of that light and conviction of conscience which the unregenerate sinner has in a work preparatory to regeneration and conversion, but of that sensibility and those dictates of conscience which most men have in a greater or less degree, even heathen as well as those that are under the light of the gospel, which suggest to them in general what they owe to God and to their neighbors, and the reasonableness of God's law, which may be called the law of nature. He is here dealing with those men who insist upon it that these dictates of natural conscience are true virtue, and hence infer that all men are naturally virtuous in some degree. He is here giving the reason why these dictates of conscience have been mistaken for true virtue. They with whom he is concerned here never speak of that peculiar kind and degree of awakening and conviction of conscience which sinners under genuine conviction have. They are so far from mistaking such conviction for true virtue, that they rather look upon it to be gross delusion, grounded on quite wrong and false notions of things. President Edwards, therefore, has not this

awakening and conviction in view, nor has any respect to it in these words; therefore, his words do not confute any thing which I have said concerning that to which they have no reference.

2. President Edwards is here speaking of those dictates of conscience which are regarded and obeyed, in a great measure at least, in the view and apprehension of him who is the subject of them. Surely he does not mean to assert that however the dictates of conscience are disregarded, opposed, and sinned against, yet this conviction is an evidence that he who has them is not so great a sinner as he who commits the same sins in ignorance, and not against his conscience. If he does, these words are as much against Mr. M., and almost every body else, as they are against me. But I am speaking of an awakening and sensibility of conscience, which is perfectly opposed and sinned against. It is, therefore, certain, that he has no reference to the convinced sinner of whom I speak; and what makes this more certain, if possible, is, that when he is expressly speaking of such an awakened, convinced sinner, he represents him as guilty of the most heinous kinds of wickedness, and *especially* provoking to God, as has been shown.

In one word, he here speaks of different persons under the same degree of light and advantage every way. This light makes impression on one and not on the other. In this case it is evident that the former is not so much blinded and hardened by sin as the latter, so is an evidence of a higher degree of sin in the latter than in the former. But what is this to the awakening and convictions of conscience, which are brought on not by the mere force of external means but by extraordinary influences on the mind, counteracting and repelling the influence of that wickedness of heart which had before held the mind in blindness and security? Not a word is said about such a case as this; therefore, nothing to the purpose for which Mr. M. has made the quotation.

3. Let it be observed that the words here quoted, taken in the sense in which Mr. M. understands them, are directly against himself. He speaks of this awakening and sensibility of conscience as taking place in an ordinary and common way, and as common to all in whom it is not weakened and suppressed by a course of opposition to it. Therefore it is not brought on the mind, and wrought in it, by any influences of the Spirit of God. If, therefore, he is here speaking of that awakening and conviction which is preparatory to conversion, he supposes no special agency of the Spirit of God in this, and implicitly denies it; which Mr. M. repeatedly speaks of as a dangerous error. Mr. M., therefore, by quoting these words,

in the sense he puts upon them, and with approbation, is guilty of self-contradiction, as he was in the former instance.

I come now to the last argument of this kind which Mr. M. makes use of against me. It is in one word this, that I have joined with Sandeman; so far, at least, as to be on his side of the question, and favor what he has advanced in what Mr. M. undertakes to oppose. Of this he takes care to remind the reader in the first sentence, after he has stated what he says I have asserted. "I must say the divinity here exhibited appears to me strange and new, never before advanced in the Christian world by any divine of tolerable sense and reputation, so far as my acquaintance reacheth; unless something of a like complexion is to be found in the letters on Theron and Aspasio, ascribed to Sandeman, who has well nigh condemned all other divines to establish himself and his party as the only true church of Christ upon earth, which it is said, hath for many ages been concealed in the wilderness, but now lately hath appeared in them, agreeable to other enthusiastic visionaries."

Sad, indeed, to be guilty of saying that which looks like any thing which has been published by such a man! He has endeavored to keep this in view to the end of his book; and in his concluding paragraph, says, "I have not been able to persuade myself but that some things have by him (the author he is opposing) been carried too far in favor of what is commonly called the *Sandemanean* error." Thus I am ranked with Sandeman in front and rear. I cannot persuade myself that Mr. M. thought this ought to have the weight of a feather in determining whether what I have asserted is right or wrong. This argument, however, will have more influence on the minds of many of his readers than all that he has said besides. Mr. M. could not be insensible of this; and if he has taken this method, and said these things with this view, and on purpose to raise an odium, and gain any advantage to his cause by this means, he cannot be excused. But of this the reader will judge.

I know not what foundation or good reason Mr. M. had to mention Sandeman's name in this controversy. Mr. S. says not one word, that I have observed, relating to this point in any of his writings. Nor is there any reason to conclude that what I have asserted is more agreeable to him than to Mr. M. I claim no alliance to him, nor he to me, that I know of. I have thought, and still think, that the faith and holiness which he teaches are not the faith and holiness which are inculcated in the New Testament; but essentially defective, and even opposite to the whole of divine revelation; so quite subversive

of true Christianity. He has, however, said many things very well, and some by which many public teachers stand justly corrected. And if he must be branded with holding the Sandemanean error who agrees with Sandeman in any point, or says any thing "of a like complexion" with something which he has written, who, then, shall escape?

By all I can learn, my section on means is no more agreeable to Sandeman and his followers than to Mr. M. Mr. M. approves of the nine first sections, but finds great fault with the tenth; and so does Mr. Sandeman. Herein they agree. And it would not be a difficult task to show that Mr. M. agrees with him in many more points than I do; and there is evidence enough that he has a much better opinion of the man and the religion he teaches than I have, and that Mr. S. is much more friendly to him than to me, and rather takes his side in the controversy between us. What reason, then, had Mr. M. to raise such an outcry through all the country, and insinuate to the world that I held the Sandemanean error? Was it because he knew that this would make many stare at me, as some dreadful monster?

When I have attended to this method Mr. M. has taken in his dispute with me, and the way in which he has managed it, which seems almost peculiar to himself, and how he has not only tacked Sandeman upon my back and took care to keep him fast there, and held him up in sight from beginning to end, but has also ranked me with Arminians and Quakers, yea, with the devil himself;* I say, when I have attended to this, it has brought to my mind the method the Roman Catholics have often taken with Protestant martyrs who were condemned to be put to death; that is, to place a large cap on their head, on which are painted a number of hideous monsters and ugly devils, on purpose to raise the indignation of the crowd against them. It is to be observed, however, that they do this to those only who they really think deserve such treatment, they being in their view as bad, at least, as the devil himself; whereas Mr. M. has done all this to his "dear brother and worthy author, and one whom he highly esteems."

* Page 21, speaking of my book, he says, "Nor is it in my power to doubt that the grand enemy of Christ's cause and precious souls puts his hearty amen to it."

SECTION VI.

In which Mr. Mills's four Arguments to prove the Negative are considered and refuted.

Mr. Mills has reduced his arguments against what I have advanced to four general heads, which I shall consider in the order in which he has placed them.

His first argument is founded on the absurdities which he says will follow from what I have asserted, three of which he particularly mentions.

The first he states in the following words: "If the principle advanced be true, there is no possibility of the profligate sinner's becoming less vicious in the state of his mind, whatever be the wickedness he lives in the practice of, by any reformation of life while unregenerate; because reforming in any instance supposes the increase of internal light and sensibility of conscience; and then, according to this new principle, he is undoubtedly, on the whole, more vile, odious, and abominable in God's sight than he would have been had he continued secure and at ease, going on in his sins."

It appears, from what I have said already, that this is not a just consequence from that which I have asserted. For every instance of reformation of life does not suppose an increase of internal light. The profligate may reform his life from worldly motives, or by the removal of the temptation and opportunity, etc., without having any more light and conviction of conscience than he had before. Or, he may have light and conviction of conscience enough to lead him to reform his life, and yet not be the convinced sinner of whom I speak, as has been observed before. This, therefore, is not an absurdity (if it is one) that is contained in the doctrine I have advanced, but is wholly grounded in the misrepresentation he has made of it.

I have, indeed, asserted that the awakened, convinced sinner whom I describe is more guilty and vile in the exercises of his mind than he was in a state of ignorance and security, whatever is his external reformation. This is the principle itself which I hold. And what Mr. M. mentions as an absurdity no more follows from this proposition than it does from any other that ever was thought of. If there is any absurdity in the case, it lies in the proposition itself; if there is no absurdity in this, no absurd consequence can be drawn from it; unless the absurdity consists in its being a forced and unjust consequence. In this sense, I acknowledge Mr. M. has made

out a very strange and monstrous absurdity indeed. But as it is one entirely of his own make, I choose he should have all the credit of it.

Is there any absurdity in saying that a profligate may reform his external conduct in such circumstances and with such views and exercises of heart, as on the whole to be more guilty and vile than he was before? If not, then there is no absurdity in what I have advanced on this head. I assert that it is impossible for a sinner not to grow more guilty and vile than he was before, whatever alteration takes place in his external conduct, if he goes into a course of stronger and more direct acts of opposition to Jesus Christ, contrary to much higher degrees of light and conviction of conscience than before. This, I think, has been fully proved; and am sure it leads to no absurdity whatsoever. If it is impossible that a profligate should reform in any instance, without bringing himself into these circumstances, then all persons unregenerate do become more guilty and vile in every instance of reformation. But where is the absurdity of this? Is there any absurdity in supposing that the abuse of light, and sinning against it, is in all cases criminal in proportion to the degree of that light; and that the unregenerate do always abuse all the light they have; and that the awakened, convinced sinner is guilty of a much higher abuse of light than any other person can be?

But before I leave the passage now quoted I would particularly remark upon two expressions in it. He says, "There is no possibility of the profligate sinner's becoming less vicious in the state of his mind, by any reformation of life." This supposes that reformation of life has some influence on the state of the mind to render the latter less vicious; the former preceding as the cause, and the latter following as the effect. This is certainly an absurdity. All vice lies in the state or exercises of the mind; and no external conduct is virtuous or vicious, less or more, nor has any relation to the state of the mind, any further than it is the fruit and effect of that. But, passing this absurdity, what he asserts here is only this: the profligate is not less vicious in the state of his mind by any reformations of life, so long as the state of his mind is not less vicious. "Strange absurdity this, indeed!"

The other expression I would take notice of is this: "sensibility of conscience." This is a very ambiguous expression. By it sometimes is meant tenderness of conscience, and so denotes something good and right in the heart. It sometimes means only conviction of conscience. This is consistent with the most perfect degrees of wickedness of heart. It is never

true of the unregenerate that they have any sensibility of conscience in the former sense, in which sense Mr. M. seems to use it; and the reader who is not well on his guard will take it in this sense, and so be insensibly led aside by it. This expression he often uses, and always so as tends to blind and mislead. Not with such a design, I believe; for I conclude he first imposed on himself, by putting a sense on these words which is not compatible with the unregenerate, and then imposed on his reader.

I am inclined here to transcribe the following words, in which Mr. M. endeavors to represent the absurdity he fathers on me, in a very striking light, especially as they are a specimen of much of the same kind scattered through his book: "I appeal to the common sense of mankind, is not this strange divinity? What! is there no possibility that the drunkard, the thief, the liar, the profane swearer, the adulterer, the murderer, and blasphemer, should become, on the whole, less vicious in God's sight while unregenerate, by reforming all this atrocious wickedness, though on no higher principle than that of natural conscience, awakened by the common influences of the spirit, than he would be continuing in the practice of all this wickedness? Strange absurdity this!"

Here is a loud outcry indeed! But is there any reason in it? Is it not rather only an application to the imagination, prejudices, and passions of the ignorant and unguarded, and the whole of it a gross misrepresentation? It is an easy matter thus to harangue, and cry out, O strange! strange absurdity this! He has pronounced this an absurdity repeatedly in very strong terms. But if it really is one, he has not offered the least reason to prove it to be so, nor so much as attempted it. Mr. M. professes to remove as far as possible from all abstruse, metaphysical reasoning. By this means, or some other, he seems to be got far enough from reasoning of every kind. I suppose I have said enough in the foregoing sections to show, that this is so far from being an absurdity with respect to the convinced, unregenerate sinner, that it is a most evident and important truth. Let the calm, thoughtful reader stop and judge.

The next absurdity is expressed in the following words: "Another absurdity arising from this new principle is, that the more stupid, careless, and unconcerned men are, under the gospel, about what sins they commit, and what duties they neglect, the less vile, odious, and abominable they are, on the whole, in God's sight."

If Mr. M. had said, that the more blind and ignorant men are under the gospel, about sin, and duty, the less vile they

are in committing those sins and omitting the duties; this would indeed not have been a consequence from what he is arguing against, but really the very principle itself; and this surely is so far from being an absurdity, that it is a self-evident proposition. Whatsoever is contained in the words now quoted more than this is a misrepresentation. In these words, and what follows for the illustration of them, it is represented as if it followed from what I have advanced that the more conscientious men are, or the more inclined and disposed they are to act agreeable to their consciences, and come up to them, the more vile and odious they are. But I have been so far from asserting this, or any thing from whence it will follow, that I place the greater guilt and vileness of the convinced sinner in his opposing and acting against the clear light and dictates of his own conscience, however sensible he is of the dreadful consequence of this to him. The reader needs only to keep this in view to see how groundless all that Mr. M. says on this head is, and that the whole is only a gross misrepresentation.

But what if sinners are in such a situation that, so long as they continue perfect enemies to God and the Savior, and are disposed to abuse all light and advantages, and all means used with them to bring them to repentance; all means used with them, and all light and conviction of conscience, render their obstinacy and impenitence more vile and odious? What absurdity is there in this? Mr. M. has not attempted to show where the absurdity lies. He has only dressed the matter up in such words and phrases as to keep the truth of the case out of view and mislead the inattentive reader, and then cries out, "Strange absurdity this!"

I come now to the last absurdity which Mr. M. mentions. "Another absurdity that arises from this principle is, that in an exact proportion as any one under the gospel is, in the language of the author, more likely to be saved, and in the phrase of our Savior, 'nearer the kingdom of God,' he is, on the whole, more vile and odious in God's sight."

But where is the absurdity of this? Mr. M. does not attempt to show wherein the absurdity lies. It seems he thought his calling it an absurdity was sufficient to make it pass for one. It may, perhaps, with the unthinking reader, who takes Mr. M's advice and follows his example, in "removing as far as possible from all abstruse, metaphysical reasoning," that is, as I take it, from all that close, sound reasoning which requires exactness of thought and fixed attention of mind. It will also pass for the greatest absurdity with all those who think that God is more inclined to show mercy to a less sinner than to a

greater, and that the least guilty and vile are more likely to be saved than others; and are founding their hopes of their own salvation very much in this, that they are "not as other men," — not so great sinners, so guilty and vile in God's sight as the ignorant, secure profligate. M. M.'s whole book is suited to please persons of this stamp, as he not only goes on this supposition here but every where else.

I particularly observed in my section on means, that there is no foundation for such a notion in Scripture; to which Mr. M. has not said a word. He ought to have shown that what I had asserted there was groundless and contrary to Scripture, and not to have taken for granted what I thought I had proved from Scripture not to be true, and then to build so much upon it. Indeed it is a notion so shockingly dishonorable to the sovereign grace of God, and contrary to the whole gospel, and has such a direct tendency to exclude every one from all hope and throw him into absolute despair, who does not with the proud Pharisee think himself a less sinner than others in general are, that I wonder not at all that Mr. M. chose rather to keep it, as it were, behind the curtain, than to bring it out to open view and avow it expressly.

But to attend more particularly to this absurdity. If there is any in the case, it lies in this proposition, viz., that a greater sinner, one who is on the whole more vile and odious in God's sight than another, may be more likely to be saved than that other, and than he himself was, when he was not so guilty and vile as he now is. But this is so far from containing any absurdity in it, that all, and even Mr. M. himself, will grant it to be true beyond all dispute. For instance, those who live under the gospel are more likely to be saved than those who live in heathenish darkness, as all allow; and yet it will be as readily granted that gospel sinners are, in general at least, much more guilty and odious in the sight of God than the heathen.

As Mr. M. goes on to illustrate this absurdity by instancing in two persons, brought up under the same external light and advantages, one is a secure profligate, the other is under great awakenings and convictions of conscience. The latter, he says, according to me, is most likely to be saved, and yet is by far the most guilty and odious of the two. Well, what then? There is nothing shocking or absurd in this, more than there is in the case just now mentioned, unless it be in what arises from his dressing up the latter in an innocent, favorable light, and setting out the former in most monstrous colors, and then supposing him to be much more vile and odious than the other; yea, "the most vile, odious, and abominable sinner on

the face of the whole earth." He represents the latter in the following words: "From early childhood he has constantly paid such reverence and obedience to the dictates of conscience, as hath nourished the greatest degrees of tenderness to regard all duty and avoid all sin that can agree to an unregenerate state." In this way of stating the matter, Mr. M. has been guilty of two things, —

1. He has entirely misrepresented the matter in dispute between us, by dressing up the awakened, convinced sinner unregenerate in such fine colors as do not belong to him; for such a one, instead of reverencing and obeying his conscience, lives in the greatest sin, in opposition to the dictates of his conscience, and a thousand times as much light as others have; and instead of paying any "regard to all duty," he has no true regard to any duty at all, as such, but really refuses to do the whole that God commands. This misrepresentation, as has been observed, runs through the whole of Mr. M.'s book. I mention this as a specimen.

2. He has hereby really gone off from the point he was professedly attending to, viz., that they who are most likely to be saved, are proportionably more guilty and vile in God's sight than they were; and has led the attention of his reader to quite another thing, viz., the absurdity of supposing the convinced sinner so much more vile and odious than the other. I think this is indeed to "remove as far as possible from all *reasoning*, abstruse, metaphysical," or any other.

And thus having quite forgot the argument he was upon, he leads his reader a jaunt into the heathen world, to show him who is the vilest among them, upon my principles. I say, he quite forgot the argument he was upon; for among the heathen one is not more likely to be saved than another; which was the only point he was now professedly attending to. But to pass this; if we particularly follow him in his ramble, we shall find him here guilty of a very gross absurdity; (I leave it to the reader, whether it does not weigh down all that he attempted to fasten upon me;) it is this: he finds a heathen who "comes up nearest to the dictates of conscience," and yet, "in failing to come up to his duty he sins against the greatest light." How he sins against the greatest light, in not coming up to his duty, who "comes up nearest to the dictates of his conscience," it is difficult to say.

In the close of this argument, Mr. M. adds: "It is needless to observe here, that these things never did agree to the common sense of mankind, or of the Christian world; and to my weak understanding, I must say, they sound too strange to be true." I agree with Mr. M., that this observation was quite

needless, seeing all the appearance of absurdities is owing to his departing from the dictates of common sense, to raise a scarecrow to fright the unwary reader. And whether his taking such pains to frame such absurdities as these is to be attributed to his weak understanding, of which he so often boasts, or to a misimprovement of what he has, I leave the reader to judge.

Mr. Mills's second argument is from two passages of Scripture.

The first is in these words: "The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it; because they repented at the preaching of Jonas: and behold a greater than Jonas is here." (Matt. xii. 41.)

He forms an argument from these words, in the following manner: The repentance of the Ninevites, upon the preaching of Jonas, shall condemn the Jews for not repenting as the Ninevites did, though they were under the preaching of Christ. Now the repentance of the Ninevites was only a legal repentance, by which they were brought to the state of awakened, convinced sinners. It hence follows that the awakened, convinced sinner is not more vile in God's sight than the unawakened, secure sinner; for then the Ninevites coming to this state, in which they, on the whole, became more vile than they were before, even in a state of security and open wickedness, could not condemn the Jews for not repenting as the Ninevites did.

Ans. 1. The Ninevites were not awakened, convinced sinners, in the sense in which I speak of such; so no argument can be formed from them in this case. Mr. M. himself says, in a marginal note under this argument, "They were in the depth of heathenish darkness, and for any thing we know, had not so much as the name of a Mediator to be believed on among them." If this was their case they were not capable of that sin, in which I constantly place the greater guilt and vileness of awakened, convinced sinners under the gospel, viz., in their persisting in an impenitent rejecting and hating of Jesus Christ, in opposition to the light of their own consciences. The Ninevites, according to Mr. M., had no degree of this light and conviction, therefore were not in a capacity to sin against it, and so become more guilty and vile in consequence of their awakening and conviction. The Ninevites, if Mr. M.'s account of them is right, acted fully up to the light and conviction of their consciences, and did all that they knew was required of them and that was necessary in order to their escaping the divine judgments threatened. Mr. M. was surely quite inattentive to the case before him, and wholly

overlooked the character of the awakened, convinced, unregenerate sinner under the gospel, or he would have known that the case of the Ninevites was very far from being any thing to his purpose, and that the argument he has formed from them is extremely weak and altogether inconclusive.

Ans. 2. All that Jonah said to the Ninevites was, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown." This was all the light and instruction he gave them. They believed him, that they should be destroyed unless they reformed these open sins, by which their consciences told them they had provoked God. These they reformed immediately; and thus they hearkened to Jonah as they understood him; they believed his words, and they were influenced by them, according to the light and dictates of their consciences. Christ, a greater than Jonah, came to the Jews with much greater and more striking evidence that he was sent of God than Jonah had; but the Jews did not believe him and comply with his instructions, invitations, and warnings. They did not come to that repentance which Christ called them to, but persisted in rejecting him. With great propriety then did Christ address the Jews in these words: "The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation and shall condemn it," etc. As if he had said, "The men of Nineveh shall be an instance by which this generation shall be condemned in the day of judgment, for they hearkened to Jonah and regarded him, when he was sent to them, as they understood him; but this generation refuse to hearken to me, and continue impenitent under all my instructions and warnings."

Ans. 3. In these words our Savior has no reference to the real, internal character of the men of Nineveh whether they were sincere in their repentance or not; whether they were, on the whole, more guilty and vile or less than they were before Jonah came among them. All that was to his purpose is, that the men of Nineveh hearkened to the preaching of Jonah, and repented visibly; whereas the Jews did not hearken to Christ, but visibly opposed and rejected him. Christ speaks of nothing but their external appearance and conduct, without determining what they were at heart. This is evident from the words immediately following, with respect to the queen of the south. We cannot infer that she came to hear the wisdom of Solomon from any pious and good end, or that she was, on the whole, less vile than if she had not seen Solomon and heard his wisdom, because Christ says her coming to hear the wisdom of Solomon shall condemn the Jews, who despised and rejected one so much greater than Solomon. She in fact paid more regard to Solomon than the Jews did to Christ; and

this was fully to his purpose, let her act from what principles she would, and whatever was the consequence to her; he having regard only to that which was visible in her, from the history of her, and not to that of which we have no account. And in the same manner he speaks of the Ninevites.

The other passage of Scripture Mr. M. mentions under this argument is what Christ says to the scribe in consequence of his answering the question which he was then attending to, "discreetly;" i. e., understandingly, — "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." Mr. M. insists upon it that these words must mean, that though he was not a good man, yet he was less sinful in the state of his mind, and so nearer the state of a good man, on account of the attainments he had arrived to, than those who were destitute of these, or than he would have been in their absence. Hence he infers, that all awakened, reformed sinners, under the gospel, are not, on the whole, more vile in God's sight than when secure and at ease, going on in their sins under the same external means of light.

His argument, to prove that by his being not far the kingdom of God consisted in his being less sinful in the state of his mind, and in this respect not far from the state of a good man, is, that he could not be said to be so in any other sense. He particularly says, by this cannot be meant that "he was merely more likely to be converted, without respect had to any of those things by which, considered in themselves, he was less sinful, since it is evident, from the express letter of the sacred text, that in what is said of the scribe's being nigh, or not far from, the kingdom of God, respect is had to those things, and those only, by which, considered in themselves, he was less sinful."

On this it may be observed, in the first place, that in this he only begs the question and proves nothing. The question is, in what sense the scribe was not far from the kingdom of God, and what Christ has respect to in these words? Mr. M. says, he had respect to those things, and those only, by which, considered in themselves, he was less sinful; and that "this is evident from the express letter of the sacred text." But this is the very thing in dispute. Christ has respect to the words of the scribe, in which he discovered his sentiments to be right with respect to a very important truth, and which, if followed in all its just consequences, would lead him to the most important doctrines of Christianity. But that this orthodoxy in speculation implied any thing with respect to the state of his mind, as being more or less sinful, Mr. M. has not proved, but takes wholly for granted, and founds his arguments upon it.

I had said that orthodoxy, or right speculative knowledge, brings a man nearer to the kingdom of God, or renders him more likely to be saved than if he had it not, let the state of his mind, his heart, be more or less sinful. And here is an instance to my purpose, if Mr. M. rightly understands the phrase, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." Here is a person, of whom Christ says this merely upon his appearing to be right in his speculations in an important point; and the text says not a word of any thing else. But Mr. M. must bring into the account something good in his heart, or at least less sinful, because he could not, upon his plan, be nearer the kingdom of God than others without this. But this is to beg the question, as I have observed. Mr. M. had observed, that to be, in my language, "more likely to be saved," was, in the phrase of our Savior, to be "nearer the kingdom of God." Had he kept this in view he might easily have seen in what sense the scribe might be nearer the kingdom of God, by the degree of speculative knowledge he appeared to have, without concerning himself with the state of his heart, and contriving to make that less sinful, from a text which says not a word about it. At least, he should have proved that he could not be nearer the kingdom of heaven in that sense, instead of passing it over in silence, as if there could be no such sense put upon the words.

But Mr. M. seems to take it for granted, (for he has not said a word to prove it,) that the speculative knowledge which the scribe appeared to have, implied something good, or less bad and sinful in the state and temper of his mind. But this is contrary to all reason and to known fact. If he will prove this to be true, that men's hearts are less sinful and come nearer to the temper and exercises of good men in proportion as their judgment and consciences are convinced, and they advance in right speculative notions of the truths of divine revelation; I say, if he will prove this, he will gain his point and entirely overthrow what he has undertaken to dispute against; yea, he will confute what St. Paul himself has asserted. For, if men unregenerate in all cases grow less sinful as light and conviction of conscience increases, then certainly they are not more guilty and vile; nor can any one "hold the truth in unrighteousness," as St. Paul says many did. (Rom. i. 18.)

It appears, therefore, in every view, that Mr. M. has here only begged the whole of the question in dispute between us.

And he has done more than this; he has grossly contradicted himself, and that two ways. He has said, "It is evident and certain that every degree of knowledge, etc., attained by the unregenerate, that is necessary in order to a state of grace

and salvation, brings them in a state one degree nearer to it." But here he takes it for granted a person cannot be said to be nearer the kingdom of heaven on account of his knowledge. Again, he elsewhere finds fault with me that I speak of speculative knowledge only, and not of any reformation of the sinner, as rendering him more likely to be saved; where he supposes there is no connection between any speculative knowledge of the unregenerate and any degree of reformation, and that the latter is no ways implied in the former. But here he takes it for granted that speculative knowledge, or light in the understanding, does imply something good in heart, or a less degree of sinfulness, and that it necessarily brings a person to a state of mind nearer to that of a good man. Yea, that this is one of those things by which, considered in itself, a man is less sinful; for he says, Christ has respect to such things only. Men who will make such suppositions, and suppose and take for granted the whole matter in dispute, and ground an argument on that, and at the same time contradict themselves so many ways, as it were in the same breath, will, in their way, prove any thing they please.

I observe, in the next place, upon the passage quoted, that he says, "It is evident, that in what is said of the scribe's being nigh, or not far from the kingdom of God, respect is had to those things, and those things only, by which, considered in themselves, he was less sinful." The scribe might appear to have many things which, considered in themselves, might be less sinful than something else, and yet, on the whole, be more sinful and vile than if he had them not. So that, what Mr. M. here takes for granted, if allowed him as he has expressed it, makes nothing to his purpose. The scribe might, notwithstanding all this, be, on the whole, more sinful in the state of his mind than others who had not those things, by which, considered in themselves, they would be less sinful. Suppose, for instance, the speculative knowledge which the scribe had was one thing by which, considered in itself, he was less sinful; yet, if he hated and rejected Jesus Christ, with all this light and knowledge, (which he did, if he was still an unregenerate man,) he was, on the whole, a greater sinner than they who had not this knowledge. I therefore stand ready to prove that if the scribe was not really a good man, and did not love God and believe in Jesus Christ, he was, on the whole, much more sinful and vile, in the state and exercises of his mind, than those who were without this speculative knowledge. And I presume it is impossible that any one should find any thing in this text contrary to this.

Mr. M., in order to make these words of Christ answer his

purpose, supposes the scribe to be unregenerate, and yet not prejudiced against Christ, but in an awakened reformed state, and that in this state his heart was less sinful, and not far from a state of grace; and concludes that the kingdom of God means a state of grace. All these things he lays as the foundation to build his conclusion upon. All of which have not the least evidence to support them. Surely, that must be a very weak, flimsy argument, which is built wholly on such a number of precarious, uncertain suppositions; and he must be at a great loss for Scriptures to argue from who can find none more to his purpose than this.

By the kingdom of God here, may be meant the gospel dispensation, or the visible kingdom which Christ was setting up, as this is very commonly the meaning of this phrase; and the scribe might be a man of true piety on the Jewish plan, but had not yet been under advantage to satisfy himself about the character of Christ and his doctrines. If it should be objected to this, that St. Matthew says this very scribe asked Christ this question, tempting him, — I answer, this may be understood not in a bad sense; it may only mean, that he asked this question to try him, and see what his opinion was on this point, that he might be the better able to form a judgment of him. If these words are not understood in this sense, they are not consistent with his being so near the state of a good man as Mr. M. supposes him to be. In short, there is as much evidence that he was quite a pious, good man, as there is that he was so near to this, as Mr. M. says he was, and he has been perfectly arbitrary in bringing him so near the state of a good man, and yet not allowing him to be really good. If he was a good man, the meaning of Christ's words to him is, "I find you have so much light and knowledge that you want only to be a little more acquainted with me and my doctrines in order to be one of my disciples, a professed member of that kingdom which the Messiah is now about to set up."

But, after all, it is my opinion, that as we know nothing of the character of this scribe but what appears in his putting a question to Christ, and approving of his answer, and making an observation upon it, — and it is expressly said that the reply of our Lord was grounded entirely on his answer, — Christ has reference to this only; and declares that this important sentiment, in which he appeared to be so full and clear, comprehended so much, and was in such a degree the foundation of all he taught, that he was hereby in a great measure prepared to understand all the doctrines necessary to be known and believed, in order to be a member of his kingdom, and in this respect was not far from the kingdom of God.

But if this is not the true meaning of these words, and they must intend a nearness to a state of grace and salvation, there is not the least evidence that this consisted in any good, or less sinful disposition of mind by which he was not far from the temper and exercises of a good man, and more disposed heartily to embrace the gospel, than any other unregenerate man, as has been observed.

Mr. M. and others have taken it for granted, that a person, in order to be more likely to be saved than others, or to be in any true sense not far from the kingdom of God, must be in some degree well disposed or less inclined to sin, and less opposite to God and holiness, and so a much less sinner than others; hence, when they read this text, and find one pronounced not far from the kingdom of God, by Christ, they conclude he was a man of a good disposition, almost disposed to embrace the gospel, though not one word is said about it in the text.

On this plan, he has the least ground to hope for salvation who views himself to be a greater sinner than others; yea, he cannot reasonably have any hope until he has a better opinion of himself, and thinks himself better than any one who shall finally perish; and every one who is under the government of the same spirit which Christ points out in the Pharisee, who went up to the temple to pray, may have high hopes of salvation, and swell in his confidence that he is not so bad as other men. But this notion, so far as it is received, will strike death to all the hopes of every person who is of a different and opposite spirit.

And, indeed, if the scribe, by his speculations and the right notions which he appeared to have, was become less sinful and opposite to God and the gospel, and not far from a state of grace or true holiness in the state and exercises of his heart, which must imply, at least, that he was got much above half way to it, no reason can be given why he might not soon arrive to the state and exercises of a good man, by making a little more progress in his present course, and advancing in the same kind of light and knowledge and disposition of mind which he now had in such a considerable degree. If he had got so near to real holiness as not to be far from it, the greatest difficulty was over; and a few steps more in the same course in which he had hitherto proceeded would have brought him completely into the kingdom of God.

Mr. M.'s third argument consists in stating the matter in dispute between us, as he says, "in a fair light," and then "appealing to the judicious reader" to judge who is on the right side of the question. This, I confess, appears to me to

be somewhat of an odd argument, and to be expressed in a very round about, intricate way. However, we must make the best of it that we can.

I agree with him that the only point to be determined, as that on which the whole controversy turns, is, Whether the sin and guilt which the awakened, convinced, unregenerate sinner exercises and contracts in consequence of the light and conviction that he has, and which he was not chargeable with in a state of ignorance and security, are so great as to overbalance all his external reformations, be they as great as they will; so that on the whole, he is now more guilty and vile than he was before, even in the practice of all that external wickedness, which he has now forsaken? Mr. M. has not stated the point in these words, but I conclude this is his meaning.

I have particularly and largely considered this matter in some of the foregoing sections; and I am willing to join issue with Mr. M. here, and appeal to the judicious reader who has carefully attended to what has been said.

But I must beg leave to observe, that what Mr. M. calls "setting this matter in a fair light" is really a gross misrepresentation of it. Of this the "judicious reader" will be sensible, without my saying a word upon it; but he who is not so, will be in danger of being deceived by it. For the sake of such, therefore, I would say a few things to prevent the influence which it might otherwise have on them.

1. He has not set the aggravated sin and guilt of the awakened, convinced sinner in a true light; or, rather, has not brought it into view at all, in the whole that he has said. He indeed speaks of "the additional sin, arising merely from that sensibility of conscience, whereby the awakened sinner reforms *all* known sin." But there can be no "additional sin" in this state of the case; for the sinner is supposed to act up to the sensibility and light of his conscience, in reforming all known sin. Such a one is either not an awakened, convinced sinner, because he does not know that unbelief and rejecting, hating and opposing Jesus Christ, is a sin, and by far the greatest of which he can be guilty, or he does embrace the gospel, and so is not unregenerate. The awakened, convinced sinner is so far from reforming all known sin, that he is constantly guilty of a thousand times more known sin than he was, or could be, before he was thus awakened and convinced, and the actual hardness and rebellion of his heart is immensely increased. This is kept wholly out of view by Mr. M. Yea, his representation is in direct opposition to this, and so most contrary to the truth. This he has done through his whole book, as

has been before observed. And he here, and every where else, puts "sensibility of conscience" in opposition to "hardness of heart," and a "hardened state," which is contrary to the truth, and only tends to mislead the unwary reader. The awakened, convinced sinner has as much hardness of heart, and is as really in a hardened state, as the secure sinner, if by hard heart is meant a rebellious, obstinate heart, which is the meaning of the word in Scripture; yea, his heart is harder than it was in a state of security, as much greater degrees of light and conviction are now let into his mind.

2. He has not set the state of the unawakened, secure sinner in a just light. This appears in what has been just observed of his representing him as having hardness of heart, and being in a hardened state, as differing herein from the awakened, convinced sinner. The secure sinner is indeed in a hardened state, but not more so, nor so much, as the awakened, convinced sinner. The former would be as much awakened and concerned about himself as the latter, had he as much light in his mind and conscience, but this would not remove the least degree of hardness of heart, but be the occasion of increasing it.

Again, he represents the secure sinner as committing all his open wickedness "presumptuously, not only against the light of God's word, but against the clear dictates of natural conscience." It is doubtless true in general, of secure profligates, under the gospel, that they sin more or less against the dictates of their conscience. But the light and dictates of their consciences are very weak and faint, and they seldom attend to this matter, or think any thing about it, and are not convinced that there is really much harm in what they do. They have no realizing apprehension that they shall be called to an account for what they are doing, and be punished for it. This must be supposed; for, in proportion as their consciences dictate this, they will be awakened and concerned. They cannot, therefore, be properly said to sin against the clear dictates of natural conscience. To be sure, they cannot be said to do so in distinction from the convinced sinner; for, as has been observed, the latter sins a thousand times as much against his conscience as the former, and against immensely clearer light and dictates of conscience, both with respect to what is sin, and what are the just consequences of it.

As to what he says, that he has "clearly showed that the degree of wickedness in Chorazin and Bethsaida, above Tyre and Sidon, consisted in a greater degree of stupidity and hardness of heart in the former, whereby they were more unimpressible than the latter, the same external means and advan-

tages to repent being supposed," I trust the reader who has attended to what I have already said upon this case, will not think he has given the least evidence of it.

Mr. Mills's fourth argument consists in showing, "Of what account these characters are with the blessed God, and how he treats them in his word and providence, viz., that of the awakened sinner, brought, though on principles of nature, to humble himself before God, repent, reform known evils, and conscientiously attend known duties, and that of the stout-hearted, bold, daring, hardened sinner, that obstinately persists in all manner of vicious and immoral practices, under the same external means of light, and against the clear dictates of his conscience."

The reader will observe in what colors these different characters are set, and will be sensible, I trust, that there are no such different characters of the unregenerate, which I have endeavored to show heretofore. The awakened sinner never does humble himself before God, but is quite as far from this as the secure profligate; yea, the pride and stubbornness of the former is exercised in a higher degree, and more directly against God, than that of the latter. And he does not conscientiously attend known duties; for, under true convictions, he knows that he really does no duty at all, has never done any thing that God commands, or paid the least obedience to him in one instance. And his conscience tells him of a thousand times more duty to God, which he with obstinacy, and knowingly refuses to do, than the secure sinner ever thought of. And the former appears to be a more stout-hearted, bold, daring, hardened sinner than the latter, as he "obstinately persists" in the highest crimes, the most heaven-daring sin that men can be guilty of; and voluntarily goes on in the way to destruction, with his eyes, as it were, wide open, and under all the awakenings and terrors of his conscience, in a view of the awful consequence of his rebellion, and in the sight of an angry God, and dreadful hell.

But let us attend to the argument. He goes on to say, "If we can find clearly of what account these characters are with the omniscient God, we shall find what they really are, and a more sure ground to form our judgment concerning them than all our weak reasonings can otherwise furnish us with. I shall therefore touch on a few instances of each kind, as exhibited in the Holy Scriptures."

I suppose I have already sufficiently shown from the Scripture how these characters stand in God's sight. However, we will attend to Mr. M.'s instances; for I doubt not we shall get some light hereby.

He first undertakes to produce instances "of awakened, humbled, reformed sinners." He instances in Ahab, Jehu, the Ninevites, and the children of Israel at Mount Sinai. Of Ahab he observes, that when he rent his clothes, etc., in consequence of the terrible message delivered to him by the prophet, the Lord took this favorable notice of it, and deferred the evil threatened: "Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? Because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days." (1 Kings xxi. 25, 29.) He appeals to all, whether it can be supposed that Ahab was not less sinful and vile when he thus humbled himself, since God takes such favorable notice of it, and out of respect to this, defers the evil threatened. He also observes concerning Jehu, that "It is evident from God's express approbation, and the bestowment of so great, though outward favor, because he had done well, that in God's account, his obedience, though but the matter of duty, upon principles of nature, was less wicked than a total disregard to God's command would have been." And his argument is to the same purpose from the case of the Ninevites whom God spared, and granted them a great salvation out of respect to their repentance, which he concludes was not a gracious repentance. Upon this the following things may be observed: —

1. If God granted favors to Ahab and Jehu, and a great deliverance and salvation to the Ninevites purely out of respect to their repentance and good deeds, while they were impenitent, unbelievers, and enemies to God and his Son, the Mediator, then he may and does show favor to sinners out of respect to what they are in themselves, their exercises and doings, and without any relation and respect to Christ, the Mediator. Therefore, if there was no such Mediator, he might show favors to sinners, take a favorable notice of their doings, and express and manifest his approbation of them, and purely out of respect to this suspend his punishments, and grant them pardon and salvation. For if he grants a less good, a less deliverance and salvation, out of respect to their character and doings, because they have done well, or have become less sinful than they were, he may as well grant a greater good, even pardon of all sin and eternal salvation, out of respect to this; especially if they should become really virtuous and obedient from the highest and best principles. If Ahab, for instance, obtained the divine approbation, and God's favorable notice, so as to have the awful judgments threatened suspended, and removed from him, only by becoming in some degree less sinful, in being filled with fears of temporal evil, while he remained yet an enemy to God, how much higher must he have risen in God's

favor had he truly repented and humbled himself before God, and returned to obedience from the noblest principles, loving God with all his heart and soul! Surely, if what he did was sufficient to abate God's anger towards him, and obtain his approbation and favor so far as to remove the heavy judgment from him which was threatened, had he made advances in his goodness so as to become perfectly friendly and obedient to God, it would have been sufficient, quite, to remove God's anger, and atone for all his past sins, and procure God's highest approbation and favor. The same observation is just when applied to Jehu and the Ninevites.

If Ahab abated the divine displeasure against him, and obtained God's approbation and favor in any degree by the alteration of his character and conduct, and purely on this account, then this did so far atone for his sins, and render his person and character — the whole taken together — less displeasing, and more acceptable to God. What need then did Ahab stand in of the atonement and merit of a Mediator, in order to obtain the acceptance of his person, and pardon of his sins, and the favor of God? He had obtained this, in some degree, purely by his own reformations and doings; and nothing could be in the way of his obtaining it in as high a degree as he needed, if he went on in his reformation and obedience to higher degrees. Therefore, no sinner wants any other atonement and righteousness in order to obtain pardon and stand complete in God's favor, but what is contained in his own reformations and obedience.

Thus, Mr. M., in his zeal in the cause of his awakened, reformed, humbled sinner, has quite sapped the foundation of the doctrine of atonement by a Mediator, and so has overthrown the whole gospel, and represented Christ as dying in vain! He has done this, I believe, without design, not really knowing what he was about, as many others have done before him; but he, and every one else, may be challenged to show the need, the propriety, and wisdom of the atonement which Christ has made, if sinners out of Christ, wholly unconnected with him and his enemies, may abate the divine displeasure, and obtain God's approbation and favor, purely by their own reformations and doings, and wholly out of respect to them.

This is what the awakened sinner is at heart desiring and seeking after; nothing would please him better than to obtain God's approbation and favor by his own reformation and doings. He always will be of this disposition as long as he views himself in the light Mr. M. sets Ahab, and till he despairs of becoming any better or less sinful in this way. And never was one reconciled to the way of salvation by Christ till

he was not only convinced in his judgment and conscience that what Mr. M. has here advanced is not true, but hates and detests such a notion in his heart.

I therefore scruple not to say, that Mr. M. has, in the passages I am considering, exalted the sinner and espoused his cause, at the expense of the honor and glory of the Mediator and Savior of sinners. Yea, that if what he has here advanced is true, Christ is dead in vain, and sinners are in an infinitely less guilty, miserable state than the preaching of the cross of Christ and the atonement by him supposes them to be. Mr. M. having observed concerning the Ninevites, that though their repentance did not "proceed from a principle of saving grace, yet a great salvation is bestowed out of respect to it, and their repentance was made the only condition of their great salvation," adds the following words: "And can it agree to the purity of God's nature to make a greater degree of wickedness, on the whole, the condition of bestowing a great salvation, though of an outward nature? Sure it cannot, since this would be to manifest some regard to sin, and encourage men to practise it with boldness." I think it may be also with as much propriety asked, Can it agree to the purity of God's nature to make a less degree of wickedness the condition? If wickedness is made the condition, it seems to be no great matter, whether it be greater or less. Surely, to make any degree of wickedness the condition, "would be to manifest some regard to sin, and so far encourage men to practise it." But, what is infinitely worse, to make the reformations and doings of the sinner the only condition of any salvation, and to grant it out of respect to these, and without any respect to Christ, his merit, and righteousness, is to set aside and destroy all law and moral government, and to manifest infinitely less hatred of sin, and to favor it and the sinner infinitely more than becomes the majesty of heaven; and nothing could tend more to "encourage men to practise it with boldness." I therefore proceed to observe, —

2. A very natural and easy meaning can be put upon these passages, consistenly with the doctrine of atonement, and the glory of the Mediator, and as consistently with the principle in opposition to which Mr. M. has attempted to set them. God, in his conduct towards these persons, and in what he says of them, has respect only to what was visible, to their external appearance and conduct; so nothing can be inferred from this with respect to their hearts, whether they were more or less sinful.

Ahab humbled himself before God in his appearance and visible conduct, and put on the external appearance and pro-

fession of a true penitent; and God, who acted, not as the searcher of hearts and final judge, in his treatment of the church and people of Israel, but as their visible head and civil governor, and treated them according to their external appearance and profession; I say, God, in this character, speaks of Ahab, and treats him according to his external appearance and conduct, i. e., as if he had been a true penitent, whether he was really so or not, or whether he was sincere or only played the hypocrite. God treated Ahab, in this case, as he did Josiah afterwards, on the appearance and profession he made of repentance and reformation, and renouncing the sin of his fathers. God uses much the same language to him on this occasion, by Huldah the prophetess, as he does to Ahab: "Because thine heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God, when thou heardest his words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, and humbledst thyself before me, and didst rend thy clothes, and weep before me; I have heard thee also, saith the Lord. Behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace, neither shall thine eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon this place." (2 Ch. xxxiv. 27, 28.) God treated Ahab as he has obliged professing Christians to treat one another. If one falls into gross external sin, and afterwards, upon their dealing faithfully with him, returns, and says he repents, i. e., puts on this appearance and profession, they are to forgive him, and treat him as a true penitent, whatever his heart may be, and though he may wickedly dissemble in the whole, and his pretensions to repentance be really more criminal than the conduct of which he professes to repent.

Thus God dealt with the church and people of Israel. When they, in profession and appearance, gave themselves up to God, and solemnly promised, "all that the Lord hath said, we will do and be obedient;" he is represented as relying on their promise, and treated them as if they were sincere and hearty in this profession and appearance. "He said, surely, they are my people, children that will not lie; so he was their Savior," (Isai. lxiii. 8;) even when, as the omniscient God, he knew that "they did flatter him with their mouth, and lied unto him with their tongues." (Ps. lxxviii. 36.)

And thus he treated the Ninevites in his providence, according to their outward appearance and profession, agreeably to the general rule of his conduct towards nations and bodies of people, which he had revealed. "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down and destroy it; if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them." (Jer. xviii. 7, 8.)

And when God says to Jehu, "Because thou hast done well in executing that which is right in mine eyes," (2 Kings x. 30,) he has reference only to his external conduct, speaking to him and treating him as if he was as sincere and friendly to God in what he did as he professed to be. These words are, therefore, consistent with his being the greatest sinner in the nation at that very time, and most odious and abominable in God's sight in all he did, it being, all taken together, nothing but a piece of high-handed wickedness. This was, doubtless, the real truth of the case; for at bottom he was no more of a friend to Jehovah than to Baal; and while he was pulling down Baal, and destroying his worshippers, and executing vengeance on the house of Ahab, he was setting himself up, and regarding only himself, in opposition to Jehovah; and all his pretences of "zeal for the Lord" were nothing but gross hypocrisy. Who, then, can think that Jehu was less sinful and vile in God's sight now than before, as Mr. M. represents him to be? And when God says of the children of Israel at Mount Sinai, "they have well said all that they have spoken," (Deut. v. 28,) he has reference to their words and profession only, and nothing is said about any thing else. They had, indeed, spoken well; they had promised obedience and said to Moses, "Speak thou unto us all that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee, and we will hear and do it." But they had no heart answerable to their words. In these good words "they did flatter him with their mouth, and lied unto him with their tongues." This is intimated in what God says to Moses on this occasion: "O that there were such an heart in them, that they would keep all my commandments always." It is, therefore, so far from being true that the people of Israel were less vile and sinful in God's sight when they said these words, and that on this account they had his "express approbation," which Mr. M. asserts, that it is certain they were more vile and odious in God's sight than if they had said nothing; if gross and solemn lying and hypocrisy is more sinful than to make no profession and tell no lie. These two last-mentioned instances are, therefore, very ill-chosen ones to answer Mr. M.'s purpose, whatever are the rest.

But if we set aside what has been said in the foregoing observations, and allow that the persons here mentioned were not so guilty and vile in God's sight as they had been, and that this is expressly asserted of them all, yet this does not afford the least shadow of an argument to prove that an awakened, convinced sinner, such a one as I describe, is not more guilty and vile in God's sight than when in a state of ignorance and security. For, I have to observe,—

3. It does not appear that any of these were the awakened, convinced sinners of which I speak, but the contrary is most evident. Let Mr. M. produce as many instances as he will of persons becoming less sinful and growing so much better, as on this account to abate and remove God's anger towards them and attain his approbation and favor; yet, this will be nothing in favor of the cause he has espoused, unless these are instances of these awakened, convinced sinners, about whom is the dispute.

Jehu has not the least appearance of any awakening and conviction, or humiliation, or so much as external reformation. I, therefore, a little wonder how Mr. M. happened to think of him for an instance of an "awakened, humbled, reformed sinner."

The case of the Ninevites has been before considered, and it appears by the account which Mr. M. gives of them, that they were very far from the conviction of which I speak, being "in the depth of heathenish darkness, and not knowing so much as the name of a Mediator."

The Israelites were terrified and affected by the extraordinary, dreadful appearances at Mount Sinai; but that they had much light and conviction let into their consciences, there is no evidence; but the contrary is most evident. They had no real conviction of conscience, of the sinfulness and perverseness of their own hearts, but thought they were disposed and ready to do all that God commanded. Instead of having any true light and conviction of conscience, they were vastly ignorant and stupid in this respect, while they were only alarmed and frighted by the external appearances of Mount Sinai; just as many persons now are affrighted by some imaginary suggestions and apprehensions, and so imagine themselves to be under the awakenings and conviction of sin, which are preparatory to conversion, and are thought to be so by many others; while they have really no true sight and conviction of their sin and danger, and know not what is their real state and character. Indeed, the Israelites were neither truly "awakened, convinced, humbled, nor reformed"; for they directly upon this fell into the grossest acts of idolatry; they made and worshipped a golden calf, and in their idolatrous revel "they sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play."

Ahab put on the appearance of a true penitent. "He put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted and lay in sackcloth, and went softly"; and thus he did, in his external appearance, humble himself before God; but there is not the least evidence that he was under what is called legal conviction, or was in any degree troubled, or thoughtful about a future state; or

that he had any right speculative notions of his guilty, lost, miserable state, as a sinner, and of the way in which he might obtain pardon and salvation. He believed the prophet, that God was angry with him for what he had done in the affair of Naboth's vineyard, and he was afraid of the temporal, worldly evils which were threatened, and put on this appearance of penitence in hopes that hereby the judgments might be averted. He is not, therefore, an instance of an awakened, convinced sinner; so is not in any degree applicable to the case before us, on supposition it was certain that he, by what he did, became less sinful. But whether he was a convinced sinner or not, as it appears by his after conduct that he was not a true penitent, we may be very sure that his heart was not answerable to the external appearance he put on, but was directly opposite thereto; and, therefore, that he was guilty of gross hypocrisy, and was more vile and hateful in God's sight than he was before he had this special admonition, and put on this hypocritical appearance. How far, then, is this instance from being to Mr. M.'s purpose!

But Mr. M. has more instances under this head, to which I will now attend. He says the point he contends for is evident from the representation our Savior makes of this matter in the following words: "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return to my house, from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in, and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first." (Mat. xii. 43–45.) He observes upon these words, that "by the house empty, swept, and garnished, is represented the state of an awakened, reformed sinner; by his return with seven other spirits more wicked than himself, entering in, and dwelling there, is represented the more desperate, wicked state, to which he is reduced on the abatement of his convictions, returning with further degrees of contracted hardness of heart to the unrestrained practice of more desperate degrees of wickedness. Now, it is expressly affirmed that the last state of that man is *worse* than the first." He then goes on to observe that this is applied to the Jewish nation, who had been awakened and reformed by the preaching of John.

It has been before observed, that in arguing from this instance, Mr. M. has expressly contradicted what he had advanced in a former argument. Since, therefore, he has introduced this at such an expense, it would be very wrong not to allow it its full weight. The reader will judge for himself, when he has attended to the following particulars: —

1. I allow that the going out of the unclean spirit intends external reformation of gross, open sins, which took place in a considerable degree among the Jews, upon the appearance and preaching of John Baptist, and continued for some time. But,

2. I think Mr. M. has mistaken the meaning of the "house empty, swept, and garnished." This does not intend external reformation, or any reformation at all; but denotes a habitation suited and prepared for the reception of such a guest or inhabitant as is an evil spirit; every thing being ready for his admittance, and suited to invite him to dwell there, and give him all desirable advantage. In one word, it denotes a heart not made better or less sinful in any degree, but fit and prepared for the entrance and abode of a devil, only in a different shape, and that he might dwell there with greater power and advantage. This, indeed, represents the state of an awakened, convinced sinner. The unclean devil which reigned in him in a state of ignorance, security, and external vice, now enters him in another shape, for which his heart is now prepared in a manner it was not before, and becomes sevenfold more wicked and vile in the exercises of a self-righteous, proud spirit, and in more direct and stronger opposition to Christ and the gospel. Mr. M. has, therefore, led me to a passage very much to my purpose, and directly against himself.

This also represents the state of the Jews when they were in some measure awakened and externally reformed. They only forsook one way of wickedness for another, which was much greater, and every way worse. They trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and hated and rejected Jesus Christ. Instead of the unclean devil, in obedience to whom they had wallowed in external filthiness, a self-righteous, proud, unbelieving devil entered them, and they became sevenfold more wicked and the children of hell than the publicans and open sinners, in their hatred of Jesus Christ, and direct and violent opposition to him.

3. By *first and last state* are meant, not the reformed state, and external wickedness afterwards returned to, but the state they were in before the unclean spirit went out, and the state in which, under the influence of seven worse devils, they hated the divine character; and rejected and opposed Jesus Christ, by which they became worse, more guilty and vile than the unclean Sodomites, and the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon, and were going on to a more dreadful damnation, notwithstanding all their external reformations and professions in which they cleansed only the outside, while the most abominable wickedness reigned within, and were "like whited sepulchres, which indeed appeared beautiful outward, but are within full

of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness." (Mat. xxiii. 27.)

Thus, the true import of this parable being attended to, it appears to be so far from containing an argument in favor of what Mr. M. has espoused, that it is directly against him, and represents the Jews, notwithstanding all their awakenings and reformations, more than sevenfold worse than they were before, while they hated the divine character clearly set before them in the incarnate Son of God, and obstinately rejected and opposed him.

But if this most natural and plain sense of the words is given up, and the interpretation Mr. M. has given is admitted, they will afford no argument in his favor; for, —

4. According to him the Jews became worse, more guilty and vile, because, under all their awakenings, reformations, light, and advantages, they did not embrace the gospel; "but hardened their hearts, and rejected the clearest light and evidence of the truth, and thereby ripened themselves for a more aggravated condemnation." It was then the abuse of the light and advantages they had in their awakened, reformed state that ripened them for a more aggravated condemnation, which is the very thing which I assert, and which Mr. M. opposes. And if it is allowed that they "finally hardened their hearts, and rejected the clearest light and evidence of the truth, and thereby ripened themselves for a more aggravated condemnation," not in their awakened, reformed state, under the preaching of John Baptist, Christ and his apostles, but, as Mr. M. supposes, after all this, by returning to their former or greater external wickedness, this instance will be nothing to the case before us; for, though it be granted that if a person who has been under great awakenings and convictions does not only abuse all his light and conviction by continuing to reject Christ and the gospel, but in opposition to all this goes into an allowed course of open wickedness, does hereby become more guilty and vile, and contracts greater hardness of heart than while he was externally reformed under the influence of his convictions of conscience; yet, it does not follow that he was so when in a state of ignorance and security before he had this light and conviction. In this case the light and conviction he has had is the reason and ground of his greater sinfulness, which serves to show how such light and conviction aggravates all his sins; and, therefore, that he could not have been so guilty and vile had he never been the subject of them; and so is an argument in favor of what I have advanced; but if it was not, it is nothing against it, for it has no relation to the case of a sinner before he falls under awakenings and conviction, but

only to those who after awakenings and convictions fall into gross, open wickedness; to which, what I assert has no respect at all. In a word, in order to prove that a sinner is more guilty and vile before he falls under awakenings and convictions than he is when thus awakened, Mr. M. brings an instance to prove that he who runs into open wickedness after he has these convictions, is on this account more guilty and vile, which surely is a very inconclusive way of arguing.

The next instance Mr. M. produces is that of "the young man, on whose declaration of his having observed the commandments from his youth, it is said, Christ beholding him, loved him." (Mark x. 21.)

Mr. M. observes upon this, that "whatever dispute may be raised on the words," he supposes it will be allowed by all, "that he was a person of an externally moral and amiable conversation, and that on that account Christ showed him respect, at least as being less vile than if he had under his religious advantages continued in greater degrees of stupidity, and lived in the open violation of all God's commandments."

Here I take leave to observe the following things:—

1. Mr. M. seems here quite to have forgot what he was about, or had undertaken to do; which was to produce instances of "awakened, humbled, reformed sinners;" for surely he could not have the least thought that this young man was such an instance. He was not reformed, for he had never been guilty of any course of external sins. He was not a humbled sinner, for he did not charge himself with the least sin; and was stupid and proud enough to think of obtaining eternal life by doing some good thing. It hence appears also that he had not the least degree of true light and conviction of conscience. Mr. M. says, "Christ showed him respect, as being less vile than if he had continued in greater degrees of stupidity." I wonder that he mentioned this; for he manifested the most shocking degree of stupidity of conscience, by saying that he had kept all the commands, which Christ mentioned to him, from his youth. One would hope there was not another such ignorant, stupid wretch among all the Jews.

2. I do not allow, what Mr. M. supposes will be allowed by all, that "Christ showed him respect," and loved him, on the account of his good character, "at least as being less vile," etc.

If Christ loved him merely because he was less vile than he might have been, he had the same reason to love every one that he saw; for we have no reason to think that any one of them was as vile and sinful as he could possibly be, on any supposition. Besides, this would be a very odd sort of love indeed, which is wholly grounded on his being less sinful and

odious than he might have been, or than others were. It is, indeed, a love which consists in not hating him so much as if he had been more odious. In this sense we may be said to love all who are not so bad as the devil or the most odious creatures in the universe.

Nor is there any reason to think that Christ loved him on account of any thing amiable and excellent in his character. His saying "all these have I observed from my youth," was much more of an expression of the most odious ignorance, stupidity, and wickedness of mind, than of any thing else.* He must have been destitute of all true benevolence, vastly proud, and a perfect enemy to God, else he could not have been so ignorant of himself, and the divine law; and Christ saw all this in the clearest light. He, "beholding him," looking on him as a poor, ignorant, stupid, proud enemy to God, and in a most wretched condition, this excited in him the love of pity and benevolence towards him; and under the influence of this he went on to use means suited to instruct and relieve him. This, I suppose, is all that is meant by his loving him. We have no need to look for something amiable and excellent in this young man, in order to account for Christ's loving him with a love of pity and benevolence. Misery and wretchedness, without any thing amiable, is the proper object of this love. Thus God is said to love the world of mankind, when they were his enemies, (John iii. 16;) and we are commanded to love our worst enemies, not with a love of complacency, but of benevolence and kindness, however odious their character may justly be to us. But if it were granted, that Christ loved him out of respect to his decent, amiable, external behavior, (as some have supposed,) this is very consistent with his being the greatest sinner in the nation, his whole character being considered, as comprehending the state and exercises of his heart. But more than enough has perhaps been said to show with what little reason Mr. M. has produced this instance in support of his cause.

He goes on to say, "Again, the same truth is clearly held

* Mr. M. often speaks of the Pharisee who went up to the temple to pray as "a proud, stupid, self-justifying sinner;" and says, "he was, in some respects, if not on the whole, the vilest of all sinners." I see not what great difference there is in the characters of these two. The young man was not an extortioner, unjust, or adulterer; and was doubtless as exact in his observance of the first table of the law as of the second. And he certainly trusted in this as a righteousness to recommend him to God. He did not think that he wanted any thing more, unless it was to make further progress in his good deeds, and do some good thing, further to recommend him to God, which he had not yet done. Surely Mr. M. had no reason to set one of these Pharisees in so bad a light as the greatest sinner on earth, and represent the other as a small sinner, and so amiable as to attract Christ's respect and complacency.

forth by the apostle Peter, where he tells us, 'If, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome; the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.'" Upon this he asks the following question: "Is it not plainly implied in these words, that while he is not again entangled, and overcome with the pollutions of the world, i. e., continues to escape them, he is less vile?"

Answer. If this is granted, it is nothing to the purpose; for, according to this, there is reference only to their abuse of that light and knowledge, which they had, after they had been awakened and reformed. The point in controversy has no relation to such a case as this. The question between us is, not whether a person that has reformed his external conduct under the influence of light and conviction of conscience may not grow worse by returning to his former ways of sinning, but whether a convinced sinner, how much soever he is reformed in his external conduct, is not on the whole worse, more guilty and vile than he was before he had this light and conviction? But this has been repeatedly observed before. It seems a little strange and odd, that Mr. M., when he is hunting up arguments to support that side which he has taken of the question in debate, should so often quite forget the point in dispute, and argue against something else.

But I have here to observe, Mr. M. has not given the true sense of the words. When St. Peter says, "the latter end is worse with them than the beginning," (or as the same words are rendered, (Matt. xii. 45,) the last state is worse with them than the first,) he means, that they who have once, under the influence of their knowledge and conviction of the truths of Christianity, externally submitted to the laws of that holy religion, and after that turn apostates, and fall into their former ways of external sin, are in a worse state than they were before they had the knowledge of Christianity. Their beginning, or first state, is the state they were in before they had escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of Christ. This is as evident as can be by the words immediately following: "For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment." To prove that the latter end is worse with them than the beginning, he says it had been better for them to have remained as they were in the beginning, i. e., in ignorance of the gospel, than to renounce it after they had known it. Mr. M. has therefore quite mistaken the force and meaning of this text. As it stands, it is rather a confirmation of the point which he opposes; for

their being in a worse state is wholly grounded, not in their greater external wickedness, for they are supposed only to return to their former ways in which they lived in the beginning; but on their returning to their old ways of sinning when they had so much knowledge and conviction of the truth. So that their sinning against the internal light and conviction which they had, is represented as the chief aggravation of their sins; which is the very thing which I assert, and which Mr. M. opposes.

Mr. M. concludes his argument from these instances with the following question: "Are not these as clear indications as can well be given by words, that the account the blessed God makes of these different characters of men, under the means of grace, is in favor of the negative part of the question?" I leave the reader now to answer this question himself.

Mr. M. proceeds "on the other hand to inquire, of what account with the blessed God the character of the secure, bold, presumptuous, hardened sinner is, who obstinately persists in vicious and immoral practices." This he proposes to do by considering the threatenings uttered by God against such in particular. And "the execution of his judgments and wrath, in the way of his providence, correspondent with the threatenings of his word," on those of this character, when this is expressly assigned as the ground of these judgments.

The threatenings he mentions are contained in the Scriptures referred to in the margin. (Pr. xxix. 1. Numb. xv. 30. Amos vi. 1. 1 Thess. v. 3. Ps. lxviii. 21. Deut. xxix. 19.) The instances of God's judgments, which he produces, are the destruction of the old world — God's sending fire and brimstone on Sodom, the judgments executed on Pharaoh, and on the people of Israel, first and last.

Upon this I shall only make the following brief remarks: —

1. Mr. M. supposes and allows that these are only threats and executions of "outward judgments," i. e., of temporal evils and calamities. And is it not easy to see why open, visible sins should be punished visibly and openly in this state, rather than those which are invisible and secret; and therefore why those sins should be threatened with these judgments? It cannot be hence inferred, that these are always most guilty and the greatest sinners in God's sight. God has nowhere in his word intimated that in his providence he treats men according to their true character, inflicting the greatest outward judgments on the greatest sinners, and showing the greatest favors to the least guilty and vile; so far from this, that directly the contrary is abundantly revealed. Therefore, nothing can

be determined about the question in dispute, who is, on the whole, the greatest sinner, by all the threatenings and executions of God's judgments in this world.* Our Savior expressly opposes and censures such a conclusion as Mr. M. makes from these instances, in the following words: "Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay." God's bringing outward, temporal calamities on some for their visible, open sins, as a manifestation of his displeasure and anger, is no evidence that their external wickedness is greater, and more provoking to God, than the outward wickedness of many others, whom he spares and smiles on in his providence; much less is it any evidence that they are in all respects, and on the whole, greater sinners than others who escape these judgments.

It is enough that they on whom these judgments are brought, deserve them, and infinitely more, and that it is wise and proper, all things considered, for God in this way to manifest his displeasure at them, though at the same time others who escape these judgments are more guilty and vile in God's sight, and will have a much more intolerable condemnation in the day of judgment. Of this we have an instance which cannot be disputed in the inhabitants of Sodom and those of Capernaum. The former were burnt up in fire and brimstone from heaven; the latter, the most of them, at least, we have all reason to think, died a natural death, with no extraordinary marks of the divine vengeance; and yet the latter were more guilty and vile than the former, our Savior being judge, and will appear so at the day of judgment. It might be also observed that most who had an actual hand in crucifying the Lord of glory died quietly in their beds, and a peculiar vengeance fell on those who came upon the stage after this; for the evils that came on the nation of the Jews were suspended till forty years after this fact; in which time most of that generation died off, and others rose up in their room. And I suppose all will allow that the former were more guilty than the latter.

2. Some of the threats Mr. M. has here quoted have no particular reference to external sins of the unawakened, secure sinner, or to any temporal, outward judgments; but are as

* It cannot be inferred that the man of God who was sent to cry against the altar at Bethel was a greater sinner than Jeroboam or the old prophet, because he was so severely threatened, and slain by a lion, while they were spared. (1 Kings xiii.) But this inference is as well grounded as Mr. M's. Nor is it any evidence that the man who refused to smite the prophet, was in this a greater criminal than any of his neighbors, because he was for this act of disobedience to the prophet threatened, and slain by a lion. (1 Kings xx. 35, 36.)

applicable to the awakened, convinced sinner as to any other, and much more so. "He that, being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy," is peculiarly applicable to an awakened, convinced sinner. Such a one is reproved by the light and convictions of his conscience much more and oftener than any other, and he hardeneth his neck more than others in proportion as his reproofs are stronger and more constant. And his continuing to harden his neck will issue in sudden and remediless destruction. And when it is said, "God shall wound the head of his enemies, and the hairy scalp of such a one as goeth on still in his trespasses," a secure profligate is no more pointed out than an awakened, convinced sinner; for the latter is really as much an enemy to God as the former, and "goeth on still in his trespasses." Mr. M. might as well have quoted any other text in the Bible as these; and his mentioning these only shows that he either little thought what he was about, or quite misunderstood the character of the awakened, convinced sinner while unregenerate. The latter is doubtless the truth, since he appears to carry this mistake through the whole of his book, and builds all his opposition to me upon it, as has been before observed.

But, be this as it may, whether the texts Mr. M. has quoted are all to his purpose or not, let it be remembered that however many threats of outward judgments for open wickedness there are in the Bible, and though there are many instances of God's bringing judgments on men for such sins, yet this affords not the least argument that these were, all things considered, and on the whole, greater sinners than any others who have escaped these judgments; nor is any such thing implied or intimated in all this, as has been showed in the first remark. This argument, therefore, of Mr. M.'s, comes to nothing, and may well be numbered with all the rest which have been considered.

And now the reader is to judge of the weight of all Mr. M. has said in opposition to the point in debate, and whether he has overthrown, or so much as shaken, what I have advanced in my section on means, and have endeavored to vindicate in the preceding pages.

SECTION VII.

In which what Mr. M. has said upon several other Passages in my Inquiry is examined.

After Mr. M. has finished what he had to say upon the proposition he set up to dispute against, he has filled up above two thirds of his book upon another point of doctrine, which he owns I have neither expressly affirmed nor denied. He does not, however, quite forget the former dispute, but often brings it into view under this head, and seems to think himself disputing against me. What I am more especially concerned with here, is what he says under his fifth general head, in which he proposes "to touch briefly on some particular passages, which to him appear liable to exception, as not being clear from the Holy Scriptures."

The first he mentions of this sort, is my construction of those words of Christ, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." I had said that some, by the strait gate here, understand "the entrance into heaven, or eternal life." And striving to enter in at this gate must then intend "a keeping the commandments of God, or the holy exercises of true saints, by which they walk in the way to heaven; fight the good fight of faith, and so lay hold on eternal life." And proceeded to offer some things in favor of this interpretation, without expressly declaring my own opinion. Mr. M. has taken an alarm at this, as if all orthodoxy, and even religion itself, was given up by such an interpretation of these words. But let us consider what he has to say against it.

He first says, this is the Arminians' sense of this text, "which some think is a short summary of their whole scheme. For this tends to deliver them from the invisible influences of the Holy Spirit in grown persons, and sensible experiences and exercises in conversion." And he goes on to ask, "Is not advancing this gloss on the text, the most effectual method that could be taken unobservedly to overthrow Calvinism in this point, and promote Arminianism?"

Answer. I am sorry if Calvinism, or any one peculiar doctrine of it, depends so much upon the meaning of this single text, that it must stand or fall according as this is understood. I think such a supposition is more favorable to Arminianism than any interpretation that can be put upon this text. Calvinists are poorly off, indeed, if they have no text but this to prove "the invincible influences of the Holy Spirit, and sensible experiences and exercises in conversion;" which does,

indeed, say nothing about them. Many Calvinists have greatly hurt themselves and their cause by pressing into their service texts of Scripture which have no relation to the point which they would support by them; and they need not be afraid of joining with Arminians, when they are so lucky as to give the right sense of a text. And they who think the sense of this text which I have mentioned "is a short summary of the whole Arminian scheme," or tends to support it in one article, are, I imagine, quite confused and in the dark with respect to any scheme of doctrines whatever.

Mr. M. goes on to say, "However, as this interpretation of the text made by Arminians was to me obscure and unintelligible, as not holding forth the true sense of the text, so it equally is now, when made by a Calvinist. But whether this is owing to the misinterpretation of the text, or to my age and dulness, I shall not determine, but leave to the impartial public, when the following things are considered."

Let us, then, consider what he has said.

He observes that I "explain the strait gate as meaning the entrance into heaven or eternal life;" and says "If I mean entering into heaven strictly, without a metaphor, this is not till death; and then it should seem that striving to enter in by this gate would be endeavoring to die, which makes a very uncouth sense." Uncouth, indeed! But we must thank him for this sense; for I believe no mortal else would ever have thought of it. I should have thought that on my interpretation, striving to enter this gate, was striving to obtain eternal life, in going in the way that leads to it, the way of holiness; or to be of that character which alone will be admitted into heaven; or that it was to fight the good fight of faith, so as to lay hold on eternal life. This is the sense I had given of striving. He, therefore, proceeds to say, "But taking striving as he has explained it, yet it is still unintelligible how they can walk in the narrow way that leads to heaven, since they are supposed, by his exposition, to have entered there by passing through the gate." I leave the reader to make the best he can of this.

He first says that, according to my interpretation, striving to enter in at the strait gate means striving to die. In the next sentence, he says my exposition supposes they who strive to enter in at the strait gate, have entered into heaven already; and he cannot see how, after this, they can be said to walk the narrow way that leads to heaven. He then asks, "If by the entrance into heaven, I mean the entering into a state of grace or conversion, how I have opposed the sense of the text which I endeavor to overthrow?" But he presently forgets all this,

and supposes that I make the gate and the way to mean one and the same thing, and that according to my construction, living a holy life and actually entering into heaven are the same; and upon these suppositions he argues against me, in his own imagination, very strongly, till he thinks he has "restored the true and genuine sense of the text." But in the midst of all this he takes notice that I "have not attempted to explain what is meant by the narrow way, nor showed the propriety of our Lord's placing this gate before the way in his representation; both which I apprehend (says he) necessary to be done, in order to set the sense of this important text in a true and consistent light."

ANSWER. The words, *narrow way*, are not found in the text, nor is the gate placed before the way; and what need there was of explaining or saying any thing about that which is not found in the text, I cannot conceive. I did, indeed, say, that striving to enter in at the strait gate, according to the sense I mentioned, did intend walking in the way of holiness; and this I supposed was the narrow way. Mr. M. repeatedly tells of my speaking of the way, and what my exposition makes it to mean; but he has just at this instant forgot all this which was in his mind immediately before and just after, and says, "he has not attempted to explain what is meant by the narrow way."

And now, the reader is to determine whether all this is owing to Mr. M.'s age and dulness, or to something else. For my part, I cannot help determining that he was quite confused and lost here, whatever was the cause of it; and that he has done nothing towards restoring any sense of the text at all.

I observed, that the word in the original translated *strive* in the text, when used in other places in the New Testament denoted not any exercises and doings before conversion, but the exertions and labors of true Christians in their way to heaven; which might, perhaps, be a good reason for understanding it in the same sense in this place. To support this observation, I produced a number of instances. Three of these Mr. M. examines, and thinks they turn out rather against than for me. The two first are the words of St. Paul, spoken of himself and of Timothy: "I have fought the good fight. Fight the good fight of faith." Mr. M. observes that, "In both these instances, that which limits the word *fight*, or strive, to the exercises of true Christians, is rather the good fight with which it is connected. Whereas, if Mr. Hopkins's sense of the word *strive* were certain, there had been no need at all for the apostle to have added the *good* strife, or fight, since it could mean nothing else but a good and holy striving." It would have

been a wild assertion, indeed, if I had said this word always necessarily carried this sense, and could not signify any thing else. Words, I know, are in themselves quite arbitrary signs, and no more signify one thing than another, till some meaning is affixed to them. All I attempted was to show in what sense the inspired writers used it when applied to religious exercises. It was to Mr. M.'s purpose to show that they did not use it in the sense which I had said they did; but this he has not attempted.

I know, and particularly observed, that the word was originally used among the Greeks to denote the strifes in the Olympic and other public games. The apostle considers these strifes as an emblem of the Christian race and strife, in which men run and fight for eternal life; and therefore takes the word they used for the former, and applies it to the latter. He calls the latter the *good* fight, to distinguish it from that fight or agony which the word originally signified, and to which he has reference, and not to distinguish it from the exercises and doings of the unregenerate. Mr. M. says, "This seems to imply there might be a fighting and striving that was not thus strictly good and successful." I grant that it implies there was a striving in the Olympic games, in distinction from which the Christian's labor and strife is a good fight; but not that there was any other proper religious striving distinct from this.

The other instance I mentioned, which Mr. M. excepts against, is in the following words: "And every one that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now, they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible." Upon this he says, "Here the apostle speaks of striving for the mastery, and for a corruptible crown. Were these gracious exercises?" Wonderful question!

Answer. These exercises are an emblem of the gracious exercises of true Christians, in which they strive for an incorruptible crown, which is here asserted of them. The reader shall judge with how good a grace, and what propriety, Mr. M. adds, "This text which he has produced, seems to confute the interpretation he has advanced, instead of establishing it." He who can think this a confutation of the interpretation I have advanced, can easily confute every interpretation that ever was, or can be, advanced on any text in the Bible.

I quoted Dr. Doddridge, and Pool's Synopsis, to prove that some suppose that by the strait gate is meant the entrance into heaven or eternal life. Mr. M. has been at some pains to show that no such interpretation of this text is found in these authors. In order to this, he jumbles together part of what

Dr. Doddridge says upon this and another text, taking part of a sentence from one, and joining it to a piece of a sentence on the other, carefully leaving out the words which are apparently contrary to the sense he tries to make him speak. The critical reader, who has Dr. Doddridge and Mr. M. before him, will, by examining and comparing, have a more clear and striking idea of what Mr. M. has done in this matter than can be given any other way. And I am confident he will be convinced that my reference to the doctor was on good grounds; especially if he observes that in his note on this text, in order to show the sense of the original word here translated *strive*, he refers to those texts which have been mentioned, (1 Cor. ix. 25; Col. i. 29; 1 Tim. vi. 12; 2 Tim. iv. 7,) in which the exercises of Christian faith and holiness are spoken of.

Mr. M. says, "Such is my weakness that I cannot devise why this author referred to Dr. Doddridge as an authority for his new sense of this text." On this I would observe the following things: —

I did not refer to the doctor as an authority for this sense of the text. I hope I never shall be guilty of referring to any uninspired man as an authority. When I mentioned a sense which others put upon this text, I referred to the doctor as one of them, not as any evidence that this was the right sense; but that it was in fact so understood by some, as I asserted.

Why does Mr. M. here call this a new sense of this text, when he had so often said it was a sense which Arminians put upon it, unless it be that he may add to the number of his many self-contradictions!* Perhaps, however, he means to set *new* in opposition to orthodox. If so, this will account for his calling every thing he does not approve new divinity.

How far Mr. M.'s weakness appears in this, or in any thing else to be found in his book, is a matter of no great importance, and is left entirely to the judgment of the reader. All that I am concerned to make out is, the weakness of what he says in support of the cause he has espoused.

He also endeavors to show that I have made a mistake in referring to Pool's Synopsis for this sense of the text.

As this is a matter of no great importance, I will not trouble

* Besides, it appears that this was Mr. M.'s sense of the text above twenty years ago. So that he has, by calling it a new sense now, contradicted himself in another sense, and yet higher degree. In his letter to Dr. Johnson, called *A Vindication of Gospel Truth*, he says, "The Scripture nowhere puts mankind upon seeking their everlasting happiness in any other way than that of well-doing, truly such, in the account of God, i. e., doing his commandments." Certainly, then, when Christ "puts mankind upon seeking their eternal happiness," by telling them to strive to enter in at the strait gate, he means, doing the commandments of God, as I have explained it.

the reader with the defence of myself, which I think I am able to make, and a particular confutation of what Mr. M. has said; but I leave it entirely with the learned, who will be at the pains of consulting the Synopsis. However, I will just mention three mistakes which Mr. M. has made in what he has said on this head.

First. He takes whatever he finds in the Synopsis to be Mr. Pool's, as his opinion, and what he asserts; whereas Mr. Pool was only the collector and transcriber of what former expositors had wrote. Therefore he produces the different and opposite sentiments of expositors, and constantly refers to them in the margin. Mr. M.'s quotation in the margin is what Mr. Pool collected from two expositors, the latter of which has been reckoned in some sense the father of all Arminians. Mr. M. pretends to give a translation, or paraphrase of it, (though I think it is neither,) and represents it as what Mr. Pool asserts. Mr. Pool never thought himself answerable for all the opinions of expositors he quotes in his Synopsis.

Secondly. Mr. M. here again supposes I quote Pool's Synopsis as an authority to support that sense of the text which I had mentioned. Whereas I referred to this only to support my assertion, that this sense has been put on the text; and not as the least evidence that it was the right one, as I have before observed. However, while Mr. M. runs into this mistake and that just mentioned, he is right in rejecting all human authority, in the following words: "But suppose Mr. Pool was of opinion, etc., as we are to call no man *father* on earth, I would inquire," etc.

Thirdly. Mr. M. here supposes that whatever the unregenerate are directed or commanded to do, they are to do, or may do it, while unregenerate; and so that they are directions or commands to unregenerate doings. This is manifest in what he pretends to take from Pool's Synopsis, just mentioned, in the following words: "Christ invites or requires all, the unregenerate not excepted, to take in hand or enter upon the way of holiness. And that they strive in this matter with all their powers." Though all the unregenerate are required immediately to enter upon the way of holiness, and to strive in this matter, this does not certainly enjoin unregenerate strivings, unless whatever the unregenerate are commanded to do, they are to do as such, or while unregenerate. But what Mr. M. here supposes, is by no means true. The unregenerate are commanded to love God, and to strive in this matter, and exert all their powers. But it does not follow from this that unregenerate men do thus love God, or ever will while unregenerate. But this matter will be more particularly

considered in another section. I return to the text under consideration.

It was my prevailing opinion, when I wrote my Inquiry, that the *strait gate*, in this text, does not mean the entrance on a religious life, or conversion from sin to God; but the entrance into eternal life, to which a life of holiness, or the good fight of faith, is the way; and therefore is the striving here commanded, which includes the beginning in the first act of faith and repentance, as well as progress in this way unto the end of life. And I have not been led to alter my opinion by any thing that Mr. M. has said, or that I have learned from any other quarter. Something I then said in support of the interpretation in question. And I must now ask the patience of the reader while I mention several other things which appear to me to be in favor of this sense of the text.

1. The words immediately following these seem to be in favor of this construction: "When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us, etc. There shall be weeping, etc., when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God," etc. These words are evidently introduced with reference to what is said in the text, and to explain and enforce it. And we are hereby led to understand the same thing by the strait gate in the text, and the door in the next sentence. The way to eternal life, or the kingdom of God, the gate or door by which persons enter thither, and by which the patriarchs and prophets have gone into this kingdom, now stands open to all; and all are invited to enter in; and all that is necessary in order to this, is to strive to enter in, or to go in the way which leads to eternal life. And all are urged now so to run for eternal life, not as uncertainly; so to strive and fight the good fight of faith, as to lay hold on eternal life, from this awakening consideration, that many shall seek to enter in, shall cry for admittance when it is too late, and the door is forever shut. From this view of the matter, I think it is very evident that the seeking to enter in, which is distinguished from striving, and is set in opposition to it, intends the crying for admittance in at the door, after it is shut, represented in the words immediately following. And if so, it will follow, that the *strait gate* and the *door* mean the same thing; for Christ says, many shall seek to enter in, i. e., at the strait gate, and shall not be able; and then goes on to illustrate this, by telling how they shall knock and cry for admittance at this gate or door, after it is shut. And is it not equally evident, that by striving, Christ means that which shall be

effectual, and shall certainly bring a person to "enter in through the gates into heaven," since it is put in opposition to that which shall be ineffectual, and is consistent with being forever excluded? Thus I think, if we attend to Christ's own explanation of these words, we cannot be at a loss about their meaning.

2. The passage just now alluded to, (Rev. xxii. 14,) seems to be, in some measure parallel to this under consideration, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the holy city." Here is a gate, or gates mentioned, as the entrance into heaven, and the way to enter is to do his commandments. This, therefore, is striving to enter in at these gates. They, therefore, who do strive to enter in at this gate, do observe the commandment of Christ, and shall certainly be successful. If *striving* is Christ's command, they who strive do his commandment, and so shall enter into eternal life through the gate. This leads me to observe further, —

3. It seems to me very dishonorable to Christ, and contrary to his wisdom, faithfulness and goodness, to suppose that he has given any direction and command to sinners, in order to their salvation, which they may punctually observe and do, and yet miss of salvation. If they may do so, what safety is there in relying upon his advice and direction; for according to this, he does not always advise and direct to the way that leads to heaven, but to that which a man may follow, and yet be going in the way to hell. Christ says, "Blessed is the man that heareth me." (Pr. viii. 24.) He that strives to enter in at the strait gate, heareth Christ, for this is his counsel and advice to men; and therefore is safe and blessed. It is implied in these words: that he who striveth shall be able to enter in, or shall certainly enter in, in distinction from those who shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able. And who can now think, that men may faithfully and punctually take the advice, and follow the command, of him who came to teach men the way to life, and yet not be able to enter in, but perish at last?

In this view, they who take the striving here commanded to be the doings of the unregenerate, and at the same time hold that there are promises made to such strivings, are more consistent; and in this respect do not, I think, reflect so much dishonor on Christ, as they who hold the former and deny the latter. And hence it is, perhaps, that it is so common for the latter to contradict themselves, and implicitly hold that there are promises to the doings of the unregenerate, or which amounts to the same thing, while they are expressly denying it.

Mr. M. is an instance of this, not the least remarkable; for, as has been observed, he, in the book under consideration, applies Scriptures to the unregenerate, which carry a promise in them to those who comply with the direction and command. And when he had formerly wrote a book to prove there are no promises to the doings of the unregenerate, he concludes the whole with the following declaration: "On the whole, I would just make this one remark, and be it remembered, though I deny any promise, by virtue of which the special grace of God can possibly become due to the prayers and endeavors of the unregenerate, while such; yet, however, I am persuaded that it is the duty of sinners to be seeking and striving after it; and that not a single instance will be found of any sinner, in the day of judgment, able to stand forth and plead in truth, Lord I did my best endeavor to the very last, that I might obtain the salvation which is by Jesus Christ, and looked diligently lest I should fail of the grace of God; but after all, was denied." How did Mr. M. come to be thus persuaded, unless it was from the nature and perfections of God? But if these, or any thing else, are the proper ground of such a persuasion, then they are as good a security to the sinner as ten thousand promises would be. And on the same ground we may be persuaded that he who strives to enter in at the strait gate, according to the advice of our kind Savior, shall not miss of salvation, as this may be argued from the character and perfection of Christ, whether he has made any express promise or not. And now, by the way, we may see the force of the following words of Mr. M., when, speaking of this performance, he says, "which, according to my weak ability, was attempted in such a manner as might guard against this its opposite extreme, by leaving proper scriptural encouragement to a diligent attendance on means." I see not how there can be any thing worth disputing about between those who hold that there are promises made to the doings of the unregenerate, and those who hold to this encouragement. And it is worthy of particular remark here, that in these words he gives the unregenerate sinner a character which never yet belonged to such, and sets him in a light in which he is rather to be pitied than blamed, doing his best endeavor to the very last, and looking diligently lest he should fail of the grace of God. He that does his best, does unspeakably more than ever an unregenerate man did, or any other mere man in this world; for he is perfectly innocent and holy. And he who diligently seeks, shall find. He has a divine promise to rely upon, which is much better than Mr. M.'s persuasion. He who has so good an opinion of the unregenerate can never consistently think

they shall fail of salvation, upon their thus doing their best, and has no reason to quarrel with him who asserts that there are promises to such.

4. It appears to me that a person does never truly strive for that which he opposes with all his heart, and to obtain which nothing is wanting but the least degree of inclination of heart towards it, and sincere desire of it. But this is true of unregenerate sinners, in the case before us. They have not the least inclination to enter the strait gate, or to embrace the gospel. Their want of this, and fixed opposition of heart to it, is the only thing in the way of their entering, or that keeps them out. And to suppose they do strive to enter in at this gate, while they remain so, is, I think, very absurd. They may strive, indeed, and have great motions and strong exertions of mind relating to their future state and eternal salvation, but this will be so far from striving to enter in at this gate, that all their striving, every exertion and voluntary exercise of their heart, will be a refusal to enter, and opposition to it. Now, who can think Christ exhorted to such exercises as these, under the notion of their being strivings to enter in at the strait gate? This is to use language quite otherwise, and in a manner directly opposite to what mankind do in the common affairs of life.

This may be illustrated thus: The son of a certain and worthy father has stolen a thousand pounds from his father, and run off; and the father pursues and overtakes him, and kindly invites him to return home, and promises to forgive him, and to make him heir of all that he has, if he will turn about and resolutely set his face homeward, being willing to strive, to exert all his strength in overcoming the difficulties of the way to his father's house. But if he finds him obstinately set in his way, and without the least inclination to return, or so much as to turn his face about, he will not exhort him to strive to turn about under the notion of his doing this, while his heart is wholly opposite to it; because this is a contradiction. And if he should say to him, "Strive to turn about and get into the road which leads home," it would be understood as an exhortation to exercise some inclination that way, at least; and not that he should strive for this, not only without any inclination to it, but in direct opposition to his whole will. And if it was taken in the latter sense, it would be thought the most absurd proposal that ever was made. Surely he must strive without any heart or will who strives to do that which is in direct opposition to his whole heart and will, and the doing of which is nothing but willing and choosing it. And this is a strange sort of striving indeed! I am bold to

say no man ever yet had an idea of it; because it is in itself a most perfect contradiction.

For these reasons, and others that might be mentioned, I think this text is to be understood as it has been explained, and that by striving here, Christ does not mean any thing which impenitent unbelievers ever do, while such. Nor do I see any bad consequences of understanding the text in this sense. Mr. M. observes this is the Arminian sense of the text, and contrary to that which Calvinists put upon it; and says, "It seems somewhat strange, that when this author undertook the cause of orthodoxy, he should give up and reject their sense of the text which was so greatly in dispute."

ANSWER. It would seem as strange, at least, if every one who undertakes in the cause of orthodoxy should be obliged to understand every text of Scripture exactly in the same sense in which it has been taken by those who have been on the same side of the question. This would be to renounce orthodoxy in many instances, I doubt not; and what point of orthodoxy is given up or the least weakened by the sense I have given of the text I cannot imagine. Whereas, by espousing the sense which I am opposing, an important point of orthodoxy is, I think, implicitly given up, (which, indeed, is given up by Mr. M. through his whole book,) viz., that unregenerate sinners do not with their whole hearts oppose Jesus Christ and the way of salvation by him. In this view, an attempt to restore this text to the true sense is to espouse the cause of orthodoxy; and it does not fright me at all to be told that Arminians understand this text as I do. For who would not much rather join with the grossest Arminians so far as they are right, than with the most orthodox Calvinists wherein they are wrong?

Mr. M. asks, "If this text does not respect the unconverted, and enjoin duties upon them, where can there be any passage found in the Bible that has any reference to them?"

ANSWER. If this is the only text in the Bible that enjoins unregenerate duties and doings, I think the doctrine of duties enjoined on the unregenerate, to be done by them while such, which Mr. M. has so zealously espoused, stands on a very weak and precarious foundation. But it seems Mr. M. is not in earnest here; but only makes this outcry, and asks this question, to answer a particular end; for, before he has done, he thinks he finds Scripture enough besides this which enjoins duties upon the unconverted, to be done by them while such, and says that "these performances of the sinner are encouraged by God throughout the Scriptures." But this will be more particularly considered hereafter.

Mr. M., as many others have, takes this text in Luke to be parallel with that in Matthew—"Enter ye in at the strait gate; because strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life."

There is perhaps no good reason for this. The former says nothing about the narrow way; but speaks of a gate only, which, as has been observed, is in the following words called the *door*, which shall be shut when this life is at an end. But if it is granted that these two texts are parallel, meaning the same thing, Mr. M. will gain nothing by it in favor of unregenerate strivings and doings; for, upon this supposition, striving to enter in, and actually entering in, are the same thing. But to enter in at the strait gate is certainly not any thing that unregenerate men do.

Mr. M. has indeed attempted to prove that striving to enter the strait gate intends something previous to actual entrance; and his argument is so remarkable that I will transcribe every word of it. "Strive to enter in at the strait gate, i. e., strive to enter upon the Christian life, as explained above. And is not this attempt to enter, previous to actual entrance, since the former sometimes exists without the latter? For many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." Here, in order to form his argument, he makes striving to enter, and seeking to enter, to mean one and the same thing; for he proves the former is not connected with entering in, from Christ's declaring the latter is not. This makes the text to run thus: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for verily I say unto you, this striving shall in many instances be to no purpose, and you may strive as much as you will and yet never enter!" This, I believe, is quite a new sense of the text, and is peculiar to Mr. M., and I hope and trust will remain so.

But let us hear "the true and genuine sense of the text" from Mr. M., in the following words: "Were I allowed to speak freely my humble sense of the text, to me it appears, that by entering the strait gate, is meant active conversion to God, or a compliance with the covenant of grace, in the way of faith. This is the gate we must enter, upon pain of eternal damnation. What! And not required to strive in this matter! Thrice amazing!"

This is a violent discharge of fervent zeal by way of exclamation, as all will perceive; but the humble sense as well as the argument seem to be quite lost by the means; at least, are not so easily perceived. Since Mr. M. has had so long a time to cool and calm down, and I am at such a distance from him, I will venture to say, if entering the strait gate means active conversion, in the way of faith, then striving to enter is doing

that by which men enter, or actually converting to God and believing, or that which is done with a good will to this, which is the same; and all that striving which is in opposition to converting and believing, etc., (as are all the strivings of the unregenerate,) is not striving to enter the strait gate, but striving to do something else, or rather striving in direct opposition to it.

Another sentence which Mr. M. finds great fault with is in the following words: "It has been observed, that the end of using or attending on the means of grace is instruction." He thinks it is very wrong indeed, and of a bad tendency, to say the end of the use of means is instruction; and undertakes to show "that the end of attending on the means of grace, is grace, the fruits of holiness."

In order to see how groundless Mr. M.'s objection is, and how very wrong and injurious is his representation of this matter, nothing more is needful than to refer the reader to the whole passage from which he takes these words; yea, all he says upon this is sufficiently refuted in the paragraph from which he takes them, which is contained in less than ten lines.

Having taken notice in the words which Mr. M. quotes, that it had been observed that the end of using or attending on the means of grace is instruction, I proceed to say, "The question now is, what end this instruction answers; of what advantage is it to have the truth set before the mind, and to have the attention of the mind fixed upon it?" From this it sufficiently appears, had I not said another word, that I did not consider instruction or knowledge as the ultimate end of means; because the very inquiry I am upon is, "What end this instruction answers?" But Mr. M. goes on, and harangues away for a page or two, against my making instruction the ultimate end of means, in distinction from grace or holiness, and salvation. If Mr. M. did not read the whole of this passage, especially the whole paragraph and even sentence from which he quotes, he is, doubtless, very much to blame; but if he did, it will be difficult to conceive how he could ignorantly make such a gross mistake and very injurious misrepresentation. The first and immediate end which is answered by the use of means is instruction, "or (as I further express it) to lead the mind to the knowledge of that truth of which it was before ignorant, or to renew the attention to truth already known, and fix the mind upon it." And then I go on to tell what end this answers, and particularly show that it prepares the mind in which there is a right taste, or whenever it shall be brought to this, to exercise holiness; and then go on to show how important and necessary it is that the unregenerate should be all

attention in the constant use of means, as the only way in which they may hope for salvation. Mr. M. not only asserts from this, that I make the only end of the use of means to be instruction, but goes on to mention some dangerous consequences that will follow from it; but as they are consequences of his own inventing, and are taken from what I never asserted, and in direct contradiction to what I say, I shall not further trouble myself or the reader with them.

But Mr. M. goes on, I think, from bad to worse, and suffers his imagination, or something else, to run quite away with him; for he proceeds to remark on another exceptionable passage of mine, which is in the following words: "If it should be asked, What good all this instruction and knowledge will do the unregenerate, who are under the dominion of a hard and impenitent heart, and will continue so until a new heart is given in regeneration? If this knowledge will be of no service to them, and really do them no good, and they are yet as far from salvation as ever, then there is no encouragement for them to attend on the means of grace in order to obtain it, and keep up a view and sense of the truths of Christianity in their minds."

I, having shown the necessity of instruction and knowledge, and the mind's attending to the truth, in order to the exercises of faith and repentance, in these words proceed to propose a query and objection, which I supposed would naturally arise in the mind of the reader; that by answering these I might more fully clear up this matter, and show what end instruction answers, and the good this will do the unregenerate, and in what sense they who thus attend are not so far from salvation as others. And this I proceed to do as an answer to this query and objection. Now Mr. M. takes this query and objection, which I introduce in order to answer, to be certain assertions of my own, viz., that this instruction and knowledge will, in fact do no good, is of no service to the unregenerate, and leaves them as far from salvation as ever. And upon such a gross mistake and misrepresentation, he harangues away for near seven pages. And what is not the least remarkable here is, that he makes use of what I had said in answer to this objection, and to show that the suppositions made in it are not true, to confute me, and to prove the same thing, as he imagined, against me. I say, as he imagined; but it requires a great stretch of charity, I confess, to suppose him in earnest here, and not rather trying how much he could misrepresent me and impose on his reader. But here we must call in for our assistance his old age, dulness, and weakness, of which he so often reminds the reader.

In answer to this query and objection, I endeavor to show what is not the end which is answered by the sinner's attendance on means while impenitent, and what good the instruction and knowledge he gets does not do, while he opposes, and lives in the abuse of it. Under this head the passages are found which have given the chief offence to Mr. M., and which have been particularly attended to in the foregoing sections. I then proceed to say what end and purpose this does answer, and what encouragement there is, in this view, to attend on means with engagedness and perseverance, to which Mr. M. has made no objection.*

As all he says, for so many pages, is founded on the gross misrepresentations I have mentioned, nothing more need be said by way of answer. However, I will take leave briefly to remark upon several things contained in these pages before I leave them.

Mr. M. here represents me as not including external reformation of open, gross sins in what is preparatory to conversion, or saying a word that implies it. Speaking of me and my tenth section, he says, "Through this whole section he has not so much as once mentioned the sinner's breaking off from his sins, as that whereby he is more in the way of God's mercy, than going on in them. All that belongs to the unregenerate as means, with the author, it seems, terminates in instruction and speculative knowledge; as though it was not as much out of God's wonted way to bestow saving grace on the sinner abandoned to all kind of wickedness, while such, as on the grossly ignorant." In these words are three contradictions, viz., to truth and fact, to his own repeated declaration, and to the words themselves.

They are contrary to fact. I say,† "To use or attend the means of grace, is to make use of all the means of instruction in the things that relate to God's moral kingdom; to go into that conduct and practice, and do all those things which tend to lead us into the knowledge and the truths of divine revelation, and to keep up the attention of the mind to them, and carefully to avoid whatever has a contrary tendency." Here I speak of "the sinner's breaking off from his sin as that whereby he is more in the way of mercy, if he who does so is in the way of using the best means of instruction," which I suppose none will question. And I expressly say that I mean that "knowledge which no openly vicious or careless sinner ever

* This I have more largely considered in what I have since published, which the reader may consult, if he pleases. See Sermon on Regeneration, pp. 568–572.

† Inquiry, ante, p. 261.

obtains." How, then, could Mr. M. say, "He has not so much as once mentioned the sinner's breaking off from his sins as that whereby he is more in the way of mercy"? etc.

In this assertion he has contradicted himself, as he has repeatedly declared the contrary, and through his whole book supposes that I am speaking of the reformed sinner, and no other. Thus he says, "Here let it be noted, that it is fully conceded by the author that the unregenerate under consideration have all degrees of light and conviction of divine truth that can agree to an unregenerate state; all that there is in a common work of the Spirit of God, preparatory to saving faith, the enlightening of natural conscience, putting the sinner upon reformation of life," etc. It seems that what he here desires may be noted, had entirely slipped his mind before he had got four pages; for he then utterly denies that the author had conceded, or so much as once mentioned, any such thing!

But, to say no more of these contradictions, it is to be observed that the words I am considering are contradictory to themselves. His words are, "As though it was not as much out of God's wonted way to bestow saving grace on the sinner abandoned to all kind of wickedness, while such, as on the grossly ignorant." These words suppose that a sinner who is abandoned to all kind of wickedness, may not be grossly ignorant and destitute of that knowledge of which I speak in my tenth section; which is an absurdity and contradiction in itself. For security in sin implies gross ignorance with respect to the knowledge of which I speak; even ignorance of the most essential and important things necessary to be known, in order to exercise faith and repentance. There is an absurdity in supposing such a one to have any tolerable degree of the instruction and knowledge of which I speak, this being peculiar to the awakened, convinced sinner of whom I am speaking, and is as inconsistent with a course of open profligacy and wickedness as light is with darkness.

I would also remark upon the following words: "Upon this principle, all the attainments of the unregenerate, such as awakening, conviction, reformation, legal humiliation, and whatsoever is preparatory to a saving faith, are no grounds at all of thankfulness to God. If they are really such worthless things, what are of no service to the unregenerate can do them no good, and on the account of which, considered in themselves, they are not less wicked than they would be without them, abandoning themselves to all manner of wickedness; in this case, to give thanks to God for them would be no less than to mock God, giving thanks for a thing of nought."

These words are predicated upon my saying, as Mr. M. has

sagaciously understood me, that all this conviction, etc., of the unregenerate are of no service to them, and answer no end, because I introduced a querist asking what good these things did, that the matter might be explained in my answer, which has been before observed. But Mr. M. goes further than all this here, and represents that I had said, that on the account of these things, considered in themselves, the unregenerate are not less wicked than they would be without them, abandoning themselves to all manner of wickedness. I am sure I have not said or intimated any such thing. All I say of the convinced sinner's not being less wicked, but more so, is consistent with these things being less sinful, considered in themselves; for I expressly place their greater sinfulness not in these things, but in something else. Why, then, did Mr. M. put in these words, "considered in themselves," unless it was on purpose to add to his other misrepresentations, or because he could not answer his purpose without them?

As for grounds of thankfulness for awakening and conviction, where is the difficulty, on supposition they are attended, not with less, but greater sinfulness? The greater sinfulness consists in the abuse of those things which are, considered in themselves, great advantages and favors. There is no ground of thankfulness, indeed, for this greater wickedness, of which these things are the occasion; but is there therefore no reason of thankfulness for a favor, because, by abusing it, all the benefit of it is lost, and it by this means becomes the occasion of greater guilt and more dreadful ruin than could have took place in any other way? This must be true, else what Mr. M. says here is less than nothing to his purpose, even directly contrary to an important truth.

Another passage of mine which Mr. M. has seen fit to remark upon, is the similitude of a father and two sons. The sons run off, determining to leave their father's house and service. The father calls after them, advises and commands them to return. One stops and attends to what his father has to say to him; the other pays no regard to what his father says, but runs on till he gets out of hearing. I observed upon this, that he who stopped and attended to what his father had to say, cannot properly be said to obey his father's command, if, after all, he refuses to return; "and may, by the light and conviction laid before him by his father, in consequence of his stopping and attending, be more guilty in refusing to submit to him, than the other that has been out of hearing."

This last sentence Mr. M. chiefly objects against. And first, he says, "This similitude does by no means fully represent the state of the case."

Answer. This similitude was not made with any particular reference to the general state of the case between Mr. M. and me, but to illustrate my answer to a particular objection which I was then considering.* If it answers the particular case as it is put in the objection which it was designed to illustrate, it answers the end proposed.

However, let us see wherein it fails. Mr. M. says, "Here is nothing of the awakened, reformed sinner, save only his making a pause, stopping his career when running away, and attending to what his father had to say." I ask, what more takes place in such a sinner that is not here represented? Mr. M. has not told. However, he proceeds to "propose a query or two, lame and defective as it is."

He asks "What was the true cause why A. (the son who run off) stopped his ears, and run off, — when B. (the other son) hearkened so far as to stop his wicked course? What can be the true cause of this difference, but a more wicked state of mind in A.?"

Answer. The true cause of this might be some suggestions made to B.'s mind of the dreadful consequence of thus leaving his father, etc., which were conveyed to him by or together with his father's words, and not to A. This, I own, must be supposed in order to make the case in this respect represent that of an awakened sinner. The awakened, reformed sinner is brought to this state by influences on his mind and conscience, by which he is made to see, and, in a sense, feel the sad and dangerous state he is in, which will immediately stop him in his career of open wickedness; I say, this is the effect of influences on his mind and conscience, which A. has not; therefore, it is not in the least owing to the less wicked state of mind of B. that there is this difference. I wonder Mr. M. should ask this question, since he so zealously holds to the influences of the Spirit of God in awakening the consciences of sinners. If I had asked such a question, Mr. M. would have had more reason to suspect and insinuate that I had "an inclination to favor the *new divinity*, that entirely denies any preparatory work in order to saving faith, by the common influences of the Spirit," than he had from any thing that I have said. Mr. M. surely does not suppose that in order to sinners being awakened by the Spirit of God, they must first become less sinful in the state of their minds than they were, or be less sinful than others. We see, then, the true reason why one sinner is awakened and another is not, can easily be given, without supposing a more wicked state of mind in the latter; and it is a little strange Mr. M. could not think of it in this case.

* See Inquiry, ante, pp. 272, 273.

Mr. M. goes on to ask, "Will any one, in this view of the case, say that B. is more wicked than A.? What! Because B. is less bold, daring, and fixed in his rebellion, and in casting the utmost contempt on his father's authority?"

ANSWER. It does not appear that "B. is less bold, daring, and fixed in his rebellion," etc.; but the contrary appears to be true. B.'s conscience is awakened to see the dreadful ruin that is before him if he does not return home to his father, and he trembles at the thought of it. He is convinced in his conscience it is his duty and highest interest to return home; that there is no other way to escape the evil he dreads, and that in this way he shall certainly escape, and be made completely happy. Yet under all this light and conviction of conscience, his heart rises against his father in a more direct and stronger manner than ever it did before in the most horrid exercises of hatred, enmity, and fixed opposition to his father's person, character, and government, while he has not the least inclination in his heart to submit, or take one step homeward, but persists in an obstinate refusal. A., it is true, is a rebel, and is wholly to blame for running off as he did; but he is not in those circumstances in which he can be so "bold and daring, and appear so obstinately fixed in his rebellion as A." He has never had any realizing apprehensions of the dreadful ruin which he is bringing on himself, but thinks all is well, and that he is pursuing his own happiness in leaving his father's house. And he has very few thoughts and exercises about his father's government and family. B. knows a thousand times more about them, and about his duty and interest, and has ten thousand times more thoughts and exercises about this matter, and they are all in the most direct opposition to his father.

We are, therefore, now prepared to answer Mr. M.'s question, "Will any one in this view of the case say, that B. is more wicked than A.?" Yes, every one will say so who will hearken to the dictates of common sense; and he who says the contrary justifies the wicked even in the height of wickedness, and reproaches and casts a high degree of contempt on the father.

Mr. M. goes on to say, "Should it be pleaded that B. is more wicked than A., because B. discovers a greater degree of tenderness and sensibility of conscience sinned against than A. in non-submission? I answer, that to argue thus, would be preposterous and absurd to the last degree; for, upon this principle, the most abandoned sinner under the gospel, having wasted his conscience, and sinned away his moral sense, so that he is past feeling, as the Scripture expresseth it, may commit the

most atrocious wickedness, and yet be innocent, because past feeling; whereas, the truth in this case is just the reverse; he, of the two under the same light and advantages, that can with the greatest boldness and freedom commit the most enormous wickedness, without remorse or feeling of conscience, is the more desperately wicked."

Here Mr. M. again forgets himself, and speaks of one who has, by a course of sinning against his conscience, got rid of his awakening and conviction; whereas, A. is not such a one, nor am I speaking of such. But what he says here in the last sentence I think cannot be true. The sinner who is most blind and ignorant with respect to his duty and true interest, and knows not that he is acting against either, so does not sin at all against his conscience, cannot be so great a sinner as he who has the greatest light and conviction of conscience relating to his duty and interest, and yet goes on in sin, in direct opposition to this. Yet this Mr. M. asserts here; but is it not most shockingly absurd? It is also directly contrary to what he says elsewhere, as he often speaks of sins against the light and dictates of conscience as peculiarly aggravated; and this he supposes in this very paragraph; for he speaks of wasting conscience as the great crime of the abandoned sinner. These two sentences, therefore, stand in direct contradiction one to the other. The first asserts him to be the greatest sinner who has most opposed his conscience; for his having wasted his conscience, and sinned away his moral sense, as that wherein his great sinfulness lies. The last asserts him to be the greatest sinner, who never had, and now has not, any light and conviction of conscience; and so has never had opportunity to waste his conscience, or sin against it; for here his great sinfulness consists in sinning without remorse or feeling of conscience, i. e., without any light and conviction of conscience. I leave it to the reader, whether "to argue thus" is not more than "preposterous and absurd to the last degree."

Mr. M. adds, "But perhaps the grand plea in reserve, to evince that B. is more faulty than A., (if different from what has already been said,) is, that B. has a higher degree of internal light and conviction that it is his duty to submit to his father than A. had, therefore more guilty."

This I think is not really "different from what has already been said;" as *tenderness* and *sensibility of conscience* must be the same thing with *light and conviction of conscience* in the unregenerate. He has, therefore, made no advance; the plea is exactly the same with that which he mentioned and answered before. But perhaps he has a better answer now.

It is this: if A. has not so much light and conviction as B., it is altogether A.'s fault that he has not. And "if it be entirely and merely A.'s fault, shall not A. be dealt with as if he had that light and conviction in his conscience, which only, and merely his own fault, wilfully stopping his ears, impeded his having?"

This answer is quite different from the former, and even in direct contradiction to that. Whether it is better, is now to be inquired. I say it is a contradiction to the foregoing, because there he places the great crime of the sinner, not in sinning against the light of his conscience, but in sinning without any light and conviction. But here he has shifted the crime, and places it in sinning against that light, which, though the sinner has not actually, yet he has virtually, because it is wholly his own fault that he has it not; so is looked upon and treated by God as actually "sinning against all that light, which he wilfully refused."

It is granted that A. is answerable for *not having*, and *rejecting*, that light and conviction, which by his own fault he has not. But it will not be granted that he is answerable for actually sinning against that light which he never had; and that he will be looked upon and dealt with by God, as if he actually had this light, and actually sinned against it; for this would be to look upon him, and treat him contrary to the truth. There is a real and great difference between him, who actually has light and conviction in his conscience and him who has it not, whatever may be the cause of this difference. And to look upon them and treat them as if there was no difference, is certainly to contradict the truth of fact.

If Mr. M.'s position is true, the most stupid, blind, and ignorant person under the gospel is as guilty, as great a sinner, in not embracing the gospel, as he who has the greatest degree of light and conviction of conscience, and yet persists in the highest exercises of enmity against Christ, and opposition to all the light he has. And he who is guilty of stopping his ears, and putting himself out of the way and beyond the reach of all means of light and instruction, by one act, is as great a sinner as he who spends a whole life in the most horrid acts of rebellion and enmity against God, contrary to the clearest light of his conscience; so that one single act which occasions ignorance in refusing to admit the light that is offered, is as great a crime, and carries as much guilt in it, as all the actions of high rebellion and enmity against God, in opposition to the clearest light and conviction of conscience, through a whole eternity. This must be so, if A. is accountable for sinning against all that light which he wilfully refused, and so had not; and is as guilty as B., who actually had it, and

yet sinned against it. A heathen, for instance, who was once invited and had a fair opportunity to come into a Christian country, and enjoy the light of the gospel, and refused, and so lives and dies in heathenish darkness, is as guilty as he who has lived all his days under the light of the gospel, and had great and clear light and conviction of conscience, and has constantly abused and rebelled against it all, in ten thousand acts of the most horrid enmity against God, which the heathen never was guilty of; it being impossible he should, in his circumstances. And, according to this, the most ignorant creature under the gospel will be reckoned and dealt with by God as having abused all the light which he might have had, had he been perfectly holy from his childhood to the end of his life; and will be found as guilty as if he actually had all this light, and had all his days abused and sinned against it all. And Paul, who did many things against Christ and his church in ignorance and unbelief, was as guilty as if he had all the light and conviction that Peter, or any of the apostles had, and must have been dealt with accordingly, had he not obtained forgiveness.

I may here say in Mr. M.'s words, "I appeal to the impartial reader, whether these be not absurdities by no means to be admitted in divinity? And whether it is possible to avoid them, the principle advanced being admitted?"

The only argument Mr. M. produces to support this contradictory assertion is, the words of Christ with respect to the Jews: "But now have they both seen and hated, both me and my father." (John xv. 24.) He says Christ treats them here as if they actually saw his divinity, though it does not appear that they actually saw it; but were blinded through the exceeding wickedness and prejudices of their hearts, and were not, at least many of them, convinced that he was the Messiah. "And so were reckoned with by God as if they had seen it; because nothing but their own mere faultiness prevented it."

Answer. The divine character was clearly set before them, in the person and character of Christ; and this they disapproved and hated; and that whether they were convinced in their judgment and consciences that this was indeed the divine character or not. In this sense they did see and hate both the Son and the Father: of this they were actually guilty, and were treated, and will be reckoned with accordingly. But it does not follow from this that they who were convinced in their consciences that he was the Christ, and yet rejected him; and they who verily thought he was an impostor, were equally guilty, and that the latter will be reckoned and dealt

with as if they actually had the light and conviction of the former, which they had not. Thanks be to God! no such absurdity is contained in this passage of Scripture, or any other.

But Mr. M. has not done with A. and B. yet. He observes that I "have said nothing of the present state of B. under conviction, as being more guilty than A., who stopped his ears and run off." He does not "attribute it to any want of ingenuity in the author," that he avoided this, being sensible that to assert B. to be more guilty than A. at present, "would be even shocking to common sense." He then goes on to ask, "What moment of future time may be fixed upon when B., as represented in the similitude above, will be more guilty than A.?"

ANSWER. It was not owing, I believe, to the want of ingenuity of the author, that he said nothing about this, as the matter to be illustrated did not require it. However, he is now ready to answer the knotty question. When B. was in the circumstances which represent an awakened, convinced sinner, he was more guilty than A. He was so when he had shocking apprehensions of the dreadful consequence to him of slighting and disobeying his father, and was convinced of the safety and happiness he should enjoy by hearkening to his father and returning home; and that this was his indispensable duty, without any delay, for which he had no excuse; and yet his whole heart rose against it and opposed it; and when the more his father discovered his goodness to him, in making him the highest offers, and urging him, by all imaginable motives, to return, and his mind was all attention to these matters, the more he hated him, and the stronger was the opposition of his heart to his taking one step towards his father's house; when B. was in these circumstances, as the awakened, convinced is, then he was more guilty than A.

Mr. M. goes on to ask another question. But an answer to this will be made in the next section, as it will more properly come in there. I now proceed to examine his remarks on another passage.

In answering the objection from the convinced sinner's growing worse, more sinful in the attendance on means, that this was matter of discouragement, and a good reason why they should not attend, I observed, that their greater sinfulness did not consist in their attendance on means, but in their impeniteney, etc., and therefore this could be no reason why they should neglect the proper means of salvation; and then proceeded to illustrate this in the following manner: "If the ploughing of the wicked is sin, shall they therefore not plough?

shall they not desire food for themselves and their families, and take the most likely method to obtain it? Their sin does not consist merely in their ploughing, so that it would be a less sin not to plough than to do it, but in the wrong views and exercises of mind with which they plough, and in the want of right ones."†

Mr. M. quotes only this one sentence, "If the ploughing of the wicked is sin, shall they therefore not plough?" and says, "that a part only is here put for the whole state of the case, and therefore can be no illustration of the point;" and then goes on to state it in his own way, and represents it as if the man's sin consisted in his ploughing and providing for his family, so that his greater sinfulness consists in this, which gives all the plausibleness there is in his state of the case; whereas I had expressly observed that the sinfulness did not consist in this, but something else, and for this end brought this instance to illustrate this particular truth, and not to illustrate the whole of my answer to the objection which I was considering.

Mr. M. concludes what he says on this passage in the following words: "And now let the reader judge, the case being fairly stated, whether he shall plough in this case; and whether the case only in part put, as above, can at all serve to illustrate the author's point." The reader is now to judge whether the case, as I put it, does not fully illustrate the point I was upon; and whether Mr. M. had any right to say he had fairly stated the case, or had not rather grossly misstated it, and done violence to the passage which was then before his eyes?

SECTION VIII.

In which it is considered whether the Doctrine that the awakened, convinced Sinner is more guilty and vile in the constant and painful Attendance on the Means of Grace, than when he was in a State of Security and open Profligacy, is an encouragement to Sinners to abandon themselves to Carelessness and Vice, or any Matter of discouragement to an Attendance on Means?

Mr. M. has represented the matter in this light, through his whole book. He supposes that awakened, convinced sinners' growing less sinful in the use of means, is matter of encouragement to attend; and that the contrary doctrine tends greatly to discourage them. And this he has particularly

* Inquiry, ante, p. 274.

expressed in the following passage: "These things, to the best of my small discernment, naturally tend either to quiet secure sinners in the careless neglect of means, going on in their sins, or to damp and retard those that are seriously inclined to exert themselves in a painful attendance on means and amendment of life; since every step they take this way, while unregenerate, they are, on the whole, involved in greater guilt than they would have been had they continued in the wilful, careless neglect of means, obstinately persisting in the grossest wickedness, as above, under the same gospel." And in the next page he says that to deny that the awakened, convinced sinner may be less sinful than in a state of security and open wickedness, "is to lay a stumbling-block in sinners' way, and to rob them of a precious branch of encouragement allowed them from the Word of God, to strive and run for eternal life, in all painful endeavors in the use of means." And again he says, "While we attempt to scare men from trusting in their duties, care must be had that we do not scare them from their duties, either by insinuating that they are more vile in that attendance they are capable of, while unregenerate, than in the neglect of it;" and he puts the following question to me: "Whether this way of reasoning in favor of A., as though he might expect some notable abatement of his guilt by stopping his ears and going out of hearing, does not carry in it too much encouragement to the sinners A. represents, who abandon themselves to wickedness, and neglect the means of grace, since they are sufficiently inclined in themselves, without the help of others, to devise pleas in their own favor?"

Mr. M. has not mentioned this as one of his arguments against the doctrine he sets himself to oppose, where he undertakes to produce arguments against it; but, as is evident, he designs it as an argument not of the least weight, and it will probably have more influence with some than any thing else that he has offered. I therefore propose particularly to consider it in this section.

In order to determine whether there is any truth in this, we must consider what are the motives which will induce the unregenerate to act or forbear acting in any case; or what is the principle they act upon, or the end which they always have in view. If we can fine what these are, we may easily determine what tends to discourage, or to encourage them in all cases; for this will be just according to the motives by which they are influenced. And here I suppose all will allow that the unregenerate are always influenced in all they do by what may be called selfish motives. They are always seeking and pursuing that which is in their view, or seems to them to be

for their own interest, and never act from any higher motive. The secure sinner, whether he is an open profligate or not, is pursuing some good in this world as his happiness, because it seems to him his own highest good in this state. The sinner, whose conscience is awakened in some measure to realize a judgment to come, and future state, and the dreadful end to which the sinner is exposed to come every moment, at once loses his keen appetite for the pleasures of time and sense, and all his pleasing worldly prospects and schemes drop and die, and he begins to feel that his whole interest lies in another world; and that he shall be happy or miserable, forever, according as he escapes hell and obtains heaven, or not. This excites in him the grand and important inquiry, "What must I do to be saved?" And he is willing to take any method and use any means, consistent with his continuing a perfect enemy to God, and holiness, or his duty, which shall be prescribed to him, as the most likely way to escape the evil which he dreads, and obtain the good which he desires; or, in other words, that shall appear most likely to promote his eternal interest.

He is, by the supposition, no more a friend to God and holiness now, or an enemy to sin, than he was before; and really cares not how much God is dishonored, and whether he is a greater or less sinner, if he may but answer his own ends. He does not fear and dread sin for its own sake, or in itself considered; but purely because of the consequence to him, which he now dreads. He is not afraid of sin, or desires to avoid it, from any true respect he has to God, and merely because it is against him, and dishonorable and offensive to him; but purely from his fear of eternal punishment. This being the case, it is easy to see it would be in vain to tell him that he will be less guilty and vile in God's sight, in consequence of his attending on means, etc.; for this in itself would not be the least encouragement and motive to him to attend. And just as much in vain would it be to tell him, in order to dissuade him from attendance on means, that if he continued impenitent he would be more guilty and vile than the careless sinner; for this will not be the least discouragement to him, so long as he views this the most likely way to be saved.

If, therefore, the sinner can be persuaded that the probability of his being saved or lost does not depend upon his being a greater sinner or a less; but he is the most likely to be saved who attends most constantly and earnestly on the means of grace, in the clearest view and sense of the important truths revealed in the Bible, and constant attention to them; and that this is the only hopeful way; I say, if he can be convinced of this, it will be a sufficient motive and encouragement

to him to attend, and will influence him in proportion to his belief and sense of a future state, and of the sad and miserable case in which he now is. And no other motive can be thought of that will have the least influence on him, to encourage him to attend on means, or as matter of discouragement. In a word, the unregenerate sinner dreads sin only as connected with misery; therefore he dreads that sin most, which, in his view, most exposes him to destruction, and is most likely to ruin him forever; but these are the sins committed in a state of security, or in the neglect of means, and not those committed under awakenings and convictions, and in a constant attendance on means, however more heinous and vile the latter are than the former. Therefore, the sinner only needs to be well instructed, in order to have all the encouragement he is capable of to attend on means. Let him be convinced that this is the most likely course he can take to be saved, and that there is no other likely way, however great may be the guilt he contracts while he continues impenitent, and it will be a strong and prevalent motive with him to take it, in proportion to his dread of eternal destruction, and desire of future happiness.

Mr. M. does, therefore, in the passages above cited, go upon a supposition which is directly contrary to the truth, viz., that the unregenerate do fear and dread sin on its own account, without any consideration of its consequence, and have some true respect to God and holiness; drop this supposition, and they appear to be without any foundation at all. If the sinner fears and hates sin for its own sake, and from respect to God, why then does he go on in sin? Let him forsake it, and all is well. If, therefore, he does neglect means, and live in known ways of open sin, under a pretence that he is afraid of that greater sin he shall be guilty of if he attends on means and becomes a convinced sinner, it is certain it is but a pretence, in which there is no truth; for if he is afraid of greater sinfulness, why not of less; why does he go on in known sin? If he hates sin, and hence sincerely desires to be delivered from it, why does he not leave off sinning and fly to Christ, the only deliverer?

If a sinner objects against attempting to pray, and says he is afraid to do it, because the prayer of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, he may be asked what he is afraid of. If he is indeed afraid of sin, and so avoids prayer that he may avoid sin, why is he not equally concerned to avoid all sin, or sin in any other way? If he is willing to do this, he may pray without sinning, and so the objection ceases. But if he is not willing to leave off sinning, but is determined to go on, then there is no sincerity or weight in the objection; for he really cares not

how much sin he commits, and he is indifferent whether he sins in one way or another. Besides, if he is afraid of sinning in prayer, lest he should be damned for it, why does he not fear sinning in any other way for the same reason; for the sins men commit in praying are no more likely to prove fatal to them than any other way of sinning; yea, this is the only likely way to escape destruction and obtain salvation.

It will be said, perhaps, though the attendance on means is the only likely way to obtain salvation, however guilty and vile the sinner may be in this way, yet if he finally miscarries and fails of salvation, he will be more miserable than if he had neglected all means and abandoned himself to the sins of a state of security; and the secure sinner will be hence induced to continue in his old way, and it will be a discouragement with all in the way of attendance on means. I answer, if any one should neglect the means of grace on this pretence, he would be self-condemned. For there is no person who is not almost constantly running ventures in hopes of obtaining his end, when he knows that if he fails of the end proposed he shall lose all his pains and cost, and will be, on the whole, a great loser; so that he had better not have been at the pains and expense than to do this, and yet fail of the end in view; and the more interesting and important the affair is in a person's view, the greater venture will he run as a means to obtain it, and the greater will be his care and attention in the matter. While men are conducting thus in their temporal affairs, and are pretending the unreasonableness of doing so in concerns of infinitely greater moment, and hence refusing to run any venture in the latter case, we may be sure there is no sincerity, and that this is not the bottom of the matter. Besides, this objection may be as well made by a heathen, to whom it is proposed to go and live in a country where the gospel is preached, or by any others, against taking pains to put themselves under greater religious advantages than they now enjoy. For if they should enjoy these advantages, and abuse them, as the most do who have them, their condemnation will be greater, and they be more miserable forever than if they had never enjoyed them. If it should be said, that if they become awakened, convinced, reformed sinners, they will be less sinful, and not so guilty or miserable, though they perish, as if they had not enjoyed those superior advantages, — I say, if this should be said and granted, yet it must be observed that they are altogether uncertain that they ever shall be such, or that they shall not abuse all their advantages so as to become much more guilty and vile than if they never had enjoyed them. Therefore, they know not but every step they take to

obtain any religious advantage will be worse than lost, and become the occasion of their greater guilt and more awful condemnation.

In short, if the doctrine of awakened, convinced sinners growing worse, more guilty and vile, is any just ground of discouragement to the use of means, then there is just ground of discouragement to take any pains to enjoy any religious means and advantages whatsoever, or to use any with others, by preaching the gospel to them, etc.; for, unless God prevents it by his sovereign grace, all this will be but the occasion of their greater sinfulness, and more aggravated destruction.

Mr. M., and every one else, may, therefore, be sure that the doctrine of the sinner's growing more vile in the use of means, if his eyes are fully opened, does not give the least encouragement to any "to abandon themselves to wickedness, and neglect the means of grace;" and never was, nor can be reasonably improved so by any. Nor does it tend in the least degree to "damp and retard those that are seriously inclined to exert themselves in a painful attendance on means and amendment of life." So far from this, that it is the only doctrine that can give proper and consistent encouragement to those who are under clear and genuine convictions; and the contrary tends directly to drive such into discouragement and despair.

This I particularly observed, and endeavored to make quite clear and evident in the conclusion of my section on means, in the following words: "If sinners were to take their only encouragement to hope for salvation in the use of means from their being less sinners than others, or not so bad as they once were, this would tend to take all encouragement from those who are under genuine convictions, and have any true view of their own sinfulness, and leave them in absolute despair. For all such, as they have a more clear and full sight of their own sins than they can have of others, are naturally led to view themselves as the greatest sinners; and as by attendance on means they get more and more acquainted with their own hearts, their own sinfulness increases in their view, they are so far from looking on themselves as less sinners than they were, that they naturally view themselves in a contrary light.

"The only proper way, therefore, to encourage the sinner who is under any great degree of genuine conviction of sin and concern about his eternal interest to attend on means with hope, is not to lead him to expect hereby to become less sinful, but to teach him the true end and design of means. He will then know that the great wickedness of his heart, exercised in all he does, and his appearing to himself to grow worse rather than better, which is commonly the chief ground of discouragement

to such, is really no reason why he should neglect means, but rather an encouragement constantly to attend."

Mr. M., instead of taking any notice of my argument here, wholly overlooks what I had in view, viz., to show that the doctrine I had advanced could be no discouragement to the sinner under proper awakenings and convictions; because he always views himself in the very light in which this doctrine sets him, i. e., as constantly growing worse, more wicked and vile; and that the contrary doctrine, viz., that sinners under conviction grow less sinful than they were before, and must do so in order to be saved, was so far from giving encouragement to such, that it tended to drive them to despair; I say, Mr. M., instead of taking notice of this, and attempting to oppose and refute it, remarks only upon the last sentence, accusing me with altering my expressions and lowering down from the point I had asserted, to something else, which he allows to be true, not choosing, he concludes, to close my discourse with that which would be so startling to a common reader. His words are: "And in the close of his discourse he comes down wonderfully, in these words — 'His appearing to himself to grow worse, is really no reason why he should neglect means; but rather an encouragement constantly to attend.' *Fully orthodox this.* But why this abatement? If the principle advanced in the former pages is true, why not through the whole? If it was of importance to be set up, why not to be kept up, especially in the close? Which if it had, would have stood thus, viz., the awakened sinner's really growing worse, on the whole, in attendance on means, as conviction of sin arises, whatever be his reformation, amendment of life, etc., than he would have been continuing secure, and going on in the practice of all manner of most enormous wickedness, is really no reason why he should neglect means."

I am ready to ask here, What does Mr. M. mean? I do keep the principle I had advanced fully in view, and am showing that upon this principle the sinner's appearing to himself to grow worse, is really no matter of discouragement, but the contrary; whereas it must be matter of the greatest discouragement on any other plan. And might I not, in this view, once mention the sinner's appearing to himself to grow worse, when the argument I was upon required it; and when, instead of this, to have spoken of the sinner's really growing worse, would have been quite nonsense, without being accused with going off from my point, coming down wonderfully, etc., as if I was afraid, in the close, to assert what I had before advanced, and endeavored to establish?

There are two leading principles that run through Mr. M.'s

book, which I had in view, and endeavored to confute in the last three pages of my section on means. One is, that the only way for a person to be more likely to be saved, or not far from the kingdom of God, is to become less sinful, and so nearer the state of a good man; God being more ready and disposed to show mercy to a less sinner than to a greater. The whole he says on the sinner's being not far from the kingdom of God sets the matter in this light. And from this he infers in the following words: "There is such a thing among the unregenerate, under the gospel, as being in state nigh to or not far from the kingdom of God." And that "their nearness in state to the kingdom of God, or which is the same, to that of a good man, consists in those attainments whereby they are, on the whole, in the state of their minds less vicious than either themselves or others would be in the absence of those things." And again, he speaks of the attainments of the unregenerate, such as awakening, conviction, reformation, etc., as that "whereby they are less wicked, and, in a true sense of Scripture, in state brought nearer to the kingdom of God, to a state of grace," etc. And in another place he represents the sinner, who is less displeasing to God, to be more in the way of mercy, so more likely to be saved. Speaking of the awakened, convinced sinner, and the careless and secure, he says the Scripture "gives a sort of preference to the former, at least, as less displeasing to God, and more in the way in which God's sovereign mercy is wont to be displayed."

The other principle I have reference to is grounded upon this, viz., that if a person grows, not less sinful, but more guilty and vile, in the use of means, this is matter of great discouragement, and that sinners cannot be encouraged to attend on means in any other view, but that they may hereby become less sinful and vile.

Had Mr. M. attended to these pages, and taken what I think is the plain meaning of them, instead of making the gross blunder and misrepresentation he has done, he must have been sensible that what I here said was in opposition to these two principles, and found himself concerned to answer it. But he has been so far from this that he has, in effect, conceded to it all, and very emphatically pronounced it orthodox.

The reader will here particularly observe what he has pronounced orthodox. "His appearing to himself to grow worse is really no reason why he should neglect means, but rather an encouragement constantly to attend." Fully orthodox, this! And he allows that this generally or always is the case with sinners under deep and genuine conviction, in the beginning of his book, where he says, "Divines of the best

character and greatest note have allowed that sinners, under deep and genuine convictions, conversing more sensibly with the wickedness of their own hearts and lives, have been ready to look on themselves as greater sinners than heretofore; yea, perhaps as growing daily worse, and more hard hearted."

Upon this, the following things are observable: —

1. If the sinner's appearing to himself to grow worse, more guilty and vile, in the use of means, is no reason why he should neglect means, then his really growing worse is no matter of discouragement. For what appears to be true to the sinner, must have just as much influence as if it was really so, until the appearance is removed, and the sinner is convinced he was mistaken. Therefore, if this appearance is no discouragement, or reason why he should neglect means, its being really so is no discouragement. This is, therefore, at least implicitly asserted in these words; and, consequently, Mr. M. has asserted it in the strongest manner by pronouncing them orthodox, in the terms he has. What then becomes of all that he has said representing this as a discouraging doctrine, "tending to damp and retard those that are sincerely inclined to exert themselves," "and laying a stumbling-block in sinners' way, and robbing them of a precious branch of encouragement?" He has here given all this up as contrary to reason and truth, so has once more run into gross self-contradiction.

It hence appears, also, how unreasonable Mr. M. is in representing me as not daring to bring this principle out, and say here, "The awakened sinner's really growing worse in attendance on means, etc.; more vile than he would have been, continuing secure, etc.; is really no reason why he should neglect means." For it is really brought out and asserted in the words I have used, as has been just observed; and Mr. M. has given his sanction to it also in the strongest terms, however "startling to the common reader" he may think it will be.

2. If the sinner, under genuine and thorough convictions, appears to himself to be much worse than he was in a state of security, then the doctrine that the sinner under true convictions does grow less sinful and vile, and that this is the only way in which he may hope to be saved, will do him no good, but will be the most discouraging doctrine that can be preached to him, and drive him to despair if he believes it.

It cannot do him any good, or be any encouragement to him to be told that he is now less sinful and vile than he was; for, by the supposition he will not believe it, but is confident that the contrary is true. But if he is taught, and he believes it, that this must be true of him in order to his being in a likely way to be saved, this will be so far from encouraging

him to go on that he will conclude himself to be in a very bad way indeed; that his attendance on means has done him hurt rather than good; and so will give out, concluding that there is no hope for him in this way. Mr. M. has, therefore, I think, by his own acknowledgment, in effect given up the whole book he has wrote, as quite useless, and to no purpose. For the doctrine he contends for can never be inculcated on the unregenerate so as to be of any service to them, but must be carefully kept out of their hearing, lest it prove very mischievous.

Let us see how the doctrine of Mr. M.'s book must be applied to the unregenerate. He will tell the secure profligate that he must reform, and earnestly attend on all means of grace; and for his encouragement, will assure him that in this way he will grow better, less sinful and vile, and so get into a more likely way to be saved, and more in the way of God's mercy; in which he has no reason to expect to share so long as he is so guilty and vile as he is at present. And the more he will reform, and the less sinful he shall become, the nearer he will come to saving conversion, and the more likely will he be to obtain it. If the sinner believes what he says, and from this encouragement reforms all ways of known external sin, and begins to attend on means, he may go on with good courage, and in his own view have a great degree of tenderness of conscience, and carefully avoid all known sin, and come up to all known duty. And if he is not led into the knowledge of his own heart, and has no genuine conviction of sin, and is not convinced of the great sin of not loving God and believing on Christ, he will have high hopes from his imagined comparative goodness, or his becoming less sinful than he was, by his reformations and duties, and be confident that God is not so angry with him now, but takes a favorable notice of his doings, and looks on him with approbation. He will now drink in Mr. M.'s doctrine with greediness, and it will be sweet and comfortable to his soul. But, alas! whither will it lead him? To the same place, no doubt, to which the proud Pharisee went.

But, if by the divine influences he falls under genuine, thorough convictions, he will begin to appear to himself to be growing more guilty and vile than he was in a state of security, instead of becoming less sinful, as he was encouraged to expect. This sinks his heart — all his hopes fail him, and he runs to Mr. M. to know what he shall do. What will Mr. M. say to him? Will he tell him this is no matter of discouragement; he has as much encouragement to go on as ever, although he continues to grow worse and worse? If he tells him this, which he has in effect declared to be fully orthodox, he will now retract and directly contradict all he had preached to him

before, and which is the fundamental doctrine of his whole book, as what he had better never have published; for it is not true, and has done no good, but hurt.

If he persists in his former doctrine, and tells the sinner that though he appears to himself to be more sinful, yet this is not his true state, if it was he would be in a bad and hopeless way indeed; but he is really growing much better, less sinful and vile than he was, so that God's anger is in a measure abated. He has reformed many gross sins, and done many duties, of all which God graciously approves, and takes a favorable notice. And if he holds on he will undoubtedly become in this way so much less sinful than others, or than he once was, that God will bestow salvation upon him rather than upon those who are more guilty and vile, having never reformed and humbled themselves at the feet of sovereign mercy as he has done, nor nourished such tenderness of conscience, etc. I say, if he should preach this, or, which is much the same, read over his book to him, the sinner will either believe it, or he will not. If he believes it, and is brought to view himself, not as growing worse but less sinful, his convictions are at an end; he is no longer under genuine, thorough convictions, for such appear, to themselves at least, to grow more sinful and vile. Therefore, in order to believe Mr. M.'s doctrine he must lose his convictions; and they never can take place again until he gives this doctrine up; and so perseverance in the belief of this doctrine will infallibly carry him to hell, unless a sinner may be converted without a proper work of conviction.

If he does not believe it, — and it is to be desired in mercy to his soul he may not, for we, and Mr. M. too, are sure that he cannot as long as his convictions continue, — I say, if he does not believe it, he will escape the mischief, and all the pains taken to inculcate it will be in vain.

If he believes it in part, viz., that sinners under genuine convictions do become less sinful, as the only hopeful way to be saved, and yet by the force of his own convictions appears to himself to be growing more sinful; this will have a very bad, discouraging tendency indeed, as has been observed, and drive him into despair, as being too great a sinner ever to hope for God's mercy. In order to relieve this sinner Mr. M. must give up his great doctrine, which he wrote his book to defend; he must do it for a while at least, as he has indeed done by the passage under consideration, and tell him that he may grow worse, more wicked and vile, and yet be in a hopeful way, and have all possible encouragement to attend; for the end of the use of means to the unregenerate is not to make them less sinful, but to lead them to that knowledge and sense of their true state and character which the unregenerate may have. Thus the

sinner must believe the doctrine which I have advanced, as long as his convictions continue and increase, or fall into despair; and can receive no other encouragement but what is consistent with this doctrine of the sinner's growing worse under convictions, and what is directly contrary to that of Mr. M.

Mr. M. concludes this general head in the following words: "Now, if in the author's view it appeared too startling to a common reader to close his discourse with this plain representation of the state of the case in debate, it had been a great favor, in my humble opinion, if he had been under the same restraint when he advanced it. To be sure, it had prevented me these my poor labors on the subject. And I think I may say, with good assurance, it had prevented grief to many worthy fathers in the ministry, whose praise is in the gospel through the churches, and who are not so far superannuated but that, with good old Eli, they tremble for fear of the ark when they see it in danger of a wrong touch from the vigor and sprightliness of younger years."

It has been observed, and clearly showed, I presume, that I am quite clear of the charge which Mr. M. has brought against me, upon which the words now transcribed are grounded; that I could not have expressed myself in the words which he prescribes for me without forgetting the argument I was upon, and being guilty of as great an oversight nearly as he has in making this charge. And that what he says I ought to have said is implied in my words, and so implicitly asserted. And that he has fully assented to it, and pronounced it orthodox, in the same breath in which he attempts to represent it so gross and shocking an error as to startle a common reader.

I confess I am not ashamed of this doctrine; nor am I afraid to assert it, in its full length and breadth, on all proper occasions. Nor do I repent my publishing it; but think I have reason to bless God that I have been under no restraint that has prevented it, even although it has occasioned "these *poor* labors of Mr. M. on the subject;" yea, whatever else I may suffer by it. Whether he had any call thus to exert himself, and whether these labors ought to be called *poor*, or by a better or a worse name, every reader will judge for himself. They have, however, I think, given me opportunity further to explain and vindicate an important truth, which tends to exalt the character of the adorable Jesus, and abase the sinner.

Who these worthy, aged, trembling fathers are, I know not, and have no inclination to detract from their praise. But I think I have a right to say, they fear where no fear is; and if they tremble, and handle the ark as Mr. M. has done, no thanks are due to them that it has not been completely overset long ago.

PART II.

WHEREIN IT IS INQUIRED, WHETHER GOD HAS GIVEN ANY COMMANDS TO UNREGENERATE SINNERS, WHICH THEY DO TRULY COMPLY WITH AND MAY PERFECTLY OBEY, WHILE UNREGENERATE?

SECTION I.

The Question particularly stated, and Arguments offered to prove the Negative.

The question is not whether any commands are given to the unregenerate; or whether any thing is required of them which it is their duty to comply with and perform. The unregenerate, it is granted, are under law as much as the regenerate, and the former are required to be perfectly holy as much as the latter, and are forbidden every thing which is contrary to this. In a word, no duty is required of the regenerate which the unregenerate are not also commanded to do. This may be true consistently with their doing no part of their duty, and living in perfect rebellion against every command while unregenerate. And, indeed, they who take the positive side of this question allow that the unregenerate never do in any degree comply with those commands which require holiness; for they grant there is no true holiness in any thing which they do. This Mr. M. constantly allows.

The question therefore is, whether there are any commands given to the unregenerate which do not require any thing truly holy, but only require such exercises and doings which they may and do comply with, and truly perform, according to the true meaning and intent of the commands, while they are perfect enemies to all true holiness?

Mr. M. has zealously espoused the affirmative side of this question, and great part of his book is taken up in attempting to prove that God requires duties of the unregenerate, which they are to do, and may and do perform while in an unregenerate state. He owns that I have not expressly denied that there are any such duties required of the unregenerate, but he has taken considerable pains to show why there is reason to suspect, and even conclude, that I held to no such duties. I am ready to own the charge, and shall proceed to produce the arguments I have for the negative.

I. According to our Savior's account of the divine law or

commandment, it requires nothing but love to God and our neighbor. (Matt. xxii. 37–39.) And he expressly says that "on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." (Matt. xxii. 40.) That is, all that is required in the law and in the prophets, every injunction and command to be found in divine revelation, really requires nothing but love to God and our neighbor; love exercised and expressed in all proper ways. No other natural and easy sense can be put upon these words of Christ. But, would they bear another sense, what St. Paul says on the same subject fixes the meaning of them. He says, "He that loveth another, hath fulfilled the law." And again, "Love is the fulfilling of the law." (Rom. xiii. 8, 10.) Love could not be the fulfilling of the law, if the law required any thing more than love, acted out to a perfect degree, and in a proper manner. Love is, therefore, the whole duty of man. Nothing more nor less is required. God has not given one precept to man in the law or the prophets, in the Old Testament or New, but what requires love to God, or man, or both, and is to be obeyed in the exercise of love, and no other way, or by nothing else. There is, therefore, no obedience but what consists in love; and where there is nothing of this, there is no duty done; nothing that is required, and is due, is given. This, I conclude, is a plain, incontestable truth, as demonstrably evident as any truth contained in divine revelation, and must approve itself to the reason of every one who will exercise his reason, and not confuse and bewilder himself with a set of words without a meaning. The unregenerate have no true love to God or their neighbor; for in this, and in the consequent exercises of enmity, their unregeneracy consists. Therefore, they do no duty, obey not one command in the law or the prophets, in the Old Testament or New.

It will be said, doubtless, they do obey and do duty in some sense, or at least some part of duty. They do external duties; or that which is the matter of duty. These things, such as prayer, reading the Bible, acts of justice, and mercy, etc., are commanded duties; and they who do these things, so far obey the command, and do their duty.

Answer. Nothing is either duty or sin, if considered without any respect to the heart, and as not implying any exercises of that; therefore, there is not really any external duty or sin which is not considered in connection with exercises of heart, and as the fruit and expression of these. If a statue is formed so as by the motion of certain springs to speak distinct words and pronounce a well composed prayer, none will imagine there is any duty done, or any part of duty, any more than in the noise of a cataract or in the whistling of the wind. Such

a statue is not a subject of command, and is not capable of any part of duty; and man is not the subject of command, or capable of any duty or sin in any other view but in that of a voluntary agent; and all the external motions and effects produced by him, which are not in any degree voluntary, are no more duty nor sin, and no more any part of either, than if there was no such thing as duty or sin in nature. If a man kills another by a motion or stroke, in which he had no design, and is perfectly involuntary, there is no more sin in this than there is in the falling of a tree on a man that kills him; and in this case, to say that the man or the tree is guilty of external sin, or has done the matter of sin, and so has really sinned and done what was forbidden, would justly be reckoned a high degree of absurdity and nonsense. But this would be as proper language as to speak of a person's doing external duty or the matter of his duty, as though some duty was really done without taking into view the exercises of his will in the affair, and not considering him as a voluntary agent. But if he is considered as a voluntary agent, and the whole of the duty lies in the exercises of the heart or will, then what is done is either duty or sin, according as these are. If one man kills another by a voluntary exertion or motion, in which he had a prudent design and desire to save his life, the action is so far from being sin or murder, that it is an act of kindness and mercy. The man committed no sin, but did his duty. If a man pronounces the words of a prayer, without one thought or voluntary exercise about it, he does no more duty than the statue just mentioned, or the tree that bows before the moving air. But if he does this voluntarily, with thought and design, and his will and design herein is perfectly bad, and the same with his who curses and blasphemes the name of God, such voluntariness, such exercises and design surely do not render the external action duty which would not be so in itself considered. If the external action was neither duty nor sin, considered as unconnected with any design or will, it does not become duty by being considered in connection with sinful volitions and as the fruit of them, but, on the contrary, the whole taken together is sin, and nothing but sin.

If it is well attended to, it will appear, I conclude, that there is a great impropriety and gross absurdity in speaking of a man's doing any part of his duty in his external conduct, when this conduct is not considered as the fruit and expression of his heart, or any way connected with it, but more especially when it is considered as the fruit of wrong and sinful exercises of heart; and to use such language in this case, and talk of doing duty in part and some degree in external conduct, by

separating it from all views and exercises of the mind, is using words without any consistent ideas, and only tends to blind and confuse the minds of those who suffer themselves to be imposed upon by such expressions. The externals of devotion and religion are the proper and appointed ways of our acting out and expressing our love to God; and in this view may be called the external part, or matter of duty; hence they have obtained the name of *duties*. But when there is really no love to God exercised and expressed in these externals, there is no duty in them; they cease to be any part of duty; and if these externals are attended upon in the exercise of perfect enmity against God, and as the fruit and expression of that, it is something far worse. But because the former have obtained the name of duties, being the proper and appointed ways of acting out and expressing respect and love to God, many have bewildered themselves by the word *duty*, and have been led to think and speak of these externals as duties, considered in themselves, and the attendance on them as doing duty; and have in this way imposed on themselves and others. These things are not required, for their own sakes, or in themselves considered, but only as proper ways of exercising and expressing love to God. Love to God is, therefore, the thing required; the whole of the duty lies in this; and where this is wanting, the externals are as to duty an empty nothing, not the thing required, and in doing them no duty is done.

In this view of the matter we may see the true meaning of what God says to the people of Israel: "When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand to tread my courts?" (Isa. i. 12.) These things were required, but not for their own sake, but only as an expression of their respect and love to God. Therefore, when this ceased to be exercised and expressed, and they appeared not to have the love of God, but the contrary, their attendance on these externals was not doing any thing that was required of them. These things were not required of them, as they performed them; therefore, in their attendance on them, they really did nothing that was required of them, and so did not the least part of their duty. To the same purpose is what God says by Jeremiah, "I spake not to your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices: but this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice." (Jer. vii. 22, 23.) Burnt offerings and sacrifices, and all other externals, were not required merely as such, or considered by themselves as mere externals; as such God did not command them, but as the expression of love and obedience. Therefore, when these were attended

upon, without the exercise of love and obedience, the thing which God respected in his command, and even the whole that was commanded, was neglected, and no duty done.

None will suppose, I presume, that the devils did any duty when they cried out, saying, "Thou art Christ, the Son of God." (Luke iv. 41.) Or when the chief devil in the possessed man prayed to Christ in the name of the rest, in the most earnest manner, "I beseech thee torment me not." (Luke viii. 28.) But the defect was not in externals, but in the want of love to Christ, and the exercise of enmity against him. And will any one imagine that men who have no more love or true respect to God than the devils, and are as real and entire enemies to him as they, which is the character of all the unregenerate; that such, I say, do any more duty in their external words and actions than the devils did in the instances mentioned? What do such men do, which the devils did not? If the want of love to Christ, and enmity against him in the latter, rendered all they did in openly confessing Christ to be the Son of God, and praying to him, not duty, but sin, why is not this as true of the former?

If a man does justice in his dealings, without any design or desire to do justice, he does no more duty than the just balance which gives to every one his due. And if one gives to the poor without design and good will, he does no more of the duty of showing mercy than the fruitful tree from which the poor is fed. And whatever external acts of kindness and charity he does, if he means not so, and has not the least degree of love and good will to his fellow-men in his heart, he certainly pays no true regard and obedience to the command to show mercy, and does no part of this duty. And if, contrary to this, his heart is full of malevolence and ill will to his neighbors, and he intends some evil to them by his external appearance of love and kindness, he is so far from doing any duty, that these external acts, considered as his acts, (and they are no acts at all in any other view,) are as really a violation of his duty, and acts of malevolence and sin, as are stealing from his neighbor, and attempting to cut his throat.

To him, who will well consider these things, I think it must appear, that to talk of doing the external and material part of duty, under the notion that this is really doing *any* duty and obeying God's commands, without any regard had to the mind, or while that is supposed to be directly contrary to all duty, is very absurd, and tends to confuse and deceive all those who will be confused and deceived by a set of unmeaning words and phrases; and that where there is no love to God or men exercised, there is no duty done, whatever is the external appearance and conduct.

It is still said by some, that though it is granted, as it must be, that external words and actions cannot be considered as any part of duty, or as having any thing of the nature of duty, unless they are viewed as the voluntary exercises of a moral agent, by which he acts out and expresses his heart; and therefore, if the principles and exercises of his heart are all wrong and sinful, no duty is done, but all is sin; yet it does not follow that the unregenerate do no duty. They may obey the divine command from the natural principles which they have; such as natural conscience and self-love. These, though they are not the best principles, yet are good, or at least not sinful; and God requires the unregenerate to improve these, and act from such principles as they have; and when they do so, this is real obedience, and they do their duty, even what God commands.

Ans. 1. There is no love to God or our neighbor in the exercise of these natural principles, or while men act from them only; it therefore follows from what has been already proved, that there is no obedience in this, because all obedience consists in love to God and our neighbor. At least it must be allowed to be proved, till it can be shown wherein the argument fails.

Ans. 2. But if this argument is laid aside, and what is here advanced is attended to, it may be proved to be groundless and very absurd. These natural principles are not principles of obedience; nor is there any obedience merely in acting from them. If the dictates of natural conscience are not according to the truth, but directly contrary to what is truth and duty, none will think, I conclude, that a man does his duty in acting according to such dictates; for this is the same as to say that a man does his duty in acting directly contrary to his duty. Will any one say that Saul did his duty, and obeyed Christ, in persecuting the church, because he acted according to the dictates of his conscience, and verily thought he ought to do it? If so, the more stupid and blind men are to duty, and the more contrary their hearts are to it, as the ground and reason of their stupidity and blindness, the more obedient and dutiful they are. If the dictates of conscience are according to the truth, and point out what is duty, they declare that this consists in love to God and our neighbor; that this is their immediate duty and all that is required. If, therefore, they continue not to love God and their neighbor, they are so far from obeying the dictates of conscience that they go in direct opposition to these, and so are very far from doing their duty. But, to say the truth, natural conscience is neither a principle of obedience nor of disobedience, as has been before observed.

There is but one principle of obedience, which is *love*, or disinterested respect or regard to God and our neighbor. Whatever regard is paid to the dictates of conscience from any other principle, there is no obedience in it; and the greatest enemy to God and his neighbor may exercise as much of this sort of obedience as any other man.

And as to self-love, if by it is meant only a love and desire of happiness, this is the principle of all actions in general, whether they be rebellion against God or obedience. It is essential to all voluntary agents, and is the principle of all the sin in the universe, as much as of holiness and obedience. If by self-love is meant selfishness, or a person's having respect to himself only, and to nothing else, either God or his neighbor, placing his happiness in his own private interest, as distinct from all other beings, desiring and pursuing this happiness and nothing else; this is so far from being a principle of obedience, that it is the principle of all the disobedience and sin that ever was, or will be, in the creation, and in direct and most perfect opposition to love to God and our neighbor. How absurd, then, is it to talk of obeying God and doing duty from a principle of self-love!

Objection. But a well-regulated self-love is reasonable and right. Persons ought to seek their own happiness, if it be true happiness, and if they seek it where it is to be had, and place it in right and proper objects, and with a proper subordination to the glory of God and the general good. How, then, can this be sin and rebellion? If it is right and reasonable, men ought to exercise it, and this is their duty, and the contrary is sin.

Ans. 1. There is no such thing as a well-regulated self-love, if by self-love be meant what has been just described. Selfishness ought not to take place in the least degree; it is in every degree unreasonable, and rebellion against God. A well-regulated self-love is quite a different thing from selfishness, and in direct opposition to it. It consists in placing our happiness in the glory of God and the good of our neighbor, and regarding our interest only as included in the interest of the whole, or the greatest good of being in general, and not something distinct and separate from it, which is so far from selfishness that it is directly opposite to it, even disinterested benevolence to being in general.

Ans. 2. No person under the influence of that self-love which has respect to himself wholly, and to no other being, is seeking after true happiness, or places it where he ought. True happiness consists in the enjoyment of God in the exercise of love to being in general; but by the supposition the

selfish man does not seek this happiness, for he has no true respect to God, or any other being but himself. And there is no more obedience in seeking future happiness in a selfish way, or without any respect and regard to the interest of any other being, than there is in seeking happiness in this present world in any way, and in any objects whatever.

Ans. 3. It is most absurd, and a gross contradiction, to talk of self-love, or selfishness subordinated to the glory of God and the general good; for self-love has no regard to God or any other being but self; and is so far from being subordinated to the glory of God and the general good, that it is an enemy to the general good; and in its own nature enmity itself against being in general. The man under the influence and dominion of self-love, regards and seeks himself only; and the language of his heart is, "I care not what becomes of the glory of God and the general good, if my own ends may be answered." And how can this principle be subordinated to the general good? Will it submit and subordinate itself to this? That is to suppose that it will change its own nature, and no longer seek self wholly, but the general good more than self, and as the highest and best end. And what can be more self-contradictory and absurd than this?

II. Though the short and plain argument that has been considered is quite sufficient, I think, to end the dispute, and prove that there are no commanded duties which the unregenerate fulfil or comply with in the least degree; yet it may be proper to mention some other arguments which prove the same thing, as they may serve to strengthen the former, with some at least, and set the absurdity of the contrary doctrine, if possible, in yet a clearer and more striking light.

Therefore, I proceed to say,—

All God's commands to his creatures are an expression of his will or heart, which is the same with their being a transcript of his moral perfection, as the common phrase is. But God's moral perfection is his holiness, and his will is holy. Therefore, whatever command is an expression of his will, must require holiness. That which requires any thing else is no expression of his moral perfection, therefore cannot be the expression of the will of God, and so cannot be his command.

III. Duty to God always supposes and implies something given to God, and done for him out of regard and respect to him. But where there is no true love to God, there is no true respect paid to him; nothing is offered to him or done for him in the intention and design of the doer. Therefore, there is really no duty done. Nothing that is due to God is given, and so no command that he can give is obeyed.

IV. If God should command the unregenerate to do any thing as such, and which they may do consistently with their having no love to him, and being under the power of perfect and reigning enmity against him; this is, in some degree, if not wholly, giving up his demands on them which require them to love him, to repent, and embrace the gospel. Such a notion seems to carry with it and suppose that these higher demands are hard and severe, and not suitable to be made on the unregenerate; God, therefore, does not insist on them, but comes down and conforms to their humor and inclination, and tells them, if they are not inclined to repent and embrace the gospel, he will point out something for them to do which is agreeable to their hearts, and which they may be inclined to do while perfect enemies to him; and is not this coming down and conforming to the will and perfectly wicked inclination of the sinner in a manner infinitely unbecoming the most high God?

Mr. M. very justly observes, "that God does not make the depraved will of the creature the rule of his duty." This, I think, is giving up the point entirely. If God does not accomodate his laws and commands to the depraved will of the creature, he has appointed no duties to be done which imply no respect to him, because their wills are so depraved that they have no respect and love, but are perfect enemies to him. If man's will was perfectly right, there would certainly be no occasion or reason for any such commands; therefore, if God gives such, it is purely out of regard to their depraved will, as the sole rule and reason of the command. Were they disposed to love God with all their heart, he would not give any command that could be obeyed without love to him; but since they have no love to him, he lowers his demand, and appoints a rule of duty suited to their hearts or wills, which have no love, but are perfectly opposite to him. And is not this to make the depraved will of the creature the rule of his duty? And is not such a notion very dishonorable to God; and in effect to give up all moral government, by making the will of the creature, and not the will and law of the Creator, the guide and rule?

If a prince should treat his rebellious subjects so, who refused to lay down their arms and submit to him, and pay him any respect, would he not act a dishonorable part, and give up his own character and government, in a measure at least, in favor of his avowed enemies and rebellious subjects? Should he, for instance, when he came among them, and called upon them to return immediately to their allegiance and submit to him, and found that they were so far from obeying, that this

demand roused them all to arms, and they stood with drawn swords pointed directly at him, obstinately refusing to yield one point to him, or submit in the least degree; should he, I say, instead of insisting on his former demand, tell them that he found they were obstinately fixed in rebellion against him, he would, therefore, propose something to them and require it of them, which they might do and yet continue rebels, and oppose and fight against him and his government as much as ever, viz., to draw up a petition to him that he would pardon them and deliver them from the miseries that their rebellion had brought upon them, which they might make and read over every day, consistently with continuing in a state of rebellion, and without making any pretences to the contrary; or if they did, they would be only pretence and profession directly contrary to the truth; and that if they would do this he would look upon them as in some measure loyal, dutiful subjects, or as doing some part of their duty, — would not this be giving up his first demand, at least, in some degree, and be implicitly granting that they were not wholly to blame for not immediately submitting to him?

If a prince should conduct so, all who were friends to his character and government would be grieved, and view him as injuring both, and in a degree giving them up in favor of rebels. I suppose this will be a clear case to all, and I see not why the case before us is not as clear; yea, much more so, in proportion to the greater dignity and worthiness of the most high God, and the proportionable inexcusable wickedness of the sinner; and the only reason, I conceive, why any have run into this notion of God's appointing duties to the unregenerate to be done by them while such, and have not been rather shocked at it, is, that they look on them as, in some measure at least, excusable for not loving God and embracing the gospel, this being above their power, and what they cannot do while unregenerate; although (poor creatures!) they are quite willing and desirous to do what they can.

V. If God commands the unregenerate to do that which they may do in a state of rebellion, and while they are with all their hearts opposing him and in the exercise of perfect enmity against him, I see not why this is not commanding sin and rebellion, and making this their duty. It must be so, if all they do is sin and rebellion, which, I think, is certain to a demonstration; for, in the exercises of a moral agent there is, there can be, no medium between holiness and sin. It will be said here, that God doth not command the sin, but the duty. I answer, take away the sin, and separate it from every thing else, and there remains nothing in which there is any moral

agency, and so nothing in which there is either sin or duty; and, therefore, nothing which can be the subject of command. Consequently, if the sin is not commanded nothing is commanded.

Mr. M. has made several attempts to answer this argument, which may most properly be considered here. He says, "The mistake on which this objection is founded, is a supposition that there is a natural connection between requiring the unregenerate to pray and requiring them to sin; whereas, the connection is entirely of a moral nature, and arises merely from a moral cause, — the creature's want of moral ability, — or which is the same, his want of disposition of heart and inclination of will sincerely to comply with the command, which is merely the creature's fault; and shall this fault of the creature be attributed to God's command, requiring what is strictly the creature's duty?"

Upon this the following things may be observed: —

1. There is, indeed, a natural connection between requiring the unregenerate to pray as such, as wholly wicked and opposite to God in all the exercises of their hearts that respect him, and requiring them to sin; for these are precisely one and the same thing, and the distinction between moral and natural here, is quite unintelligible and to no purpose. If the prayers of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord, i. e., wholly sinful, then to require them to make such prayers, is for God to require them to do what is an abomination to him, and wholly sinful; and this is the same, I think, as to command them to sin. If God requires the wicked to pray, as such, in the exercise of their wicked inclination of heart, and without any other or better inclination, what he requires is sin; and its being wholly their own fault that they are thus inclined, and do sin, as they are commanded, is so far from rendering the thing commanded no sin, that it is the only reason why it is sin; for if it was not their fault, it would not be sin.

2. If Mr. M. had constantly kept this in mind, that it is wholly man's fault that he is not holy, and really believed it, in all its length and breadth, he would never have thought of their being commanded to do unholy duties; for if it is their immediate and indispensable duty to be holy and embrace the gospel, no reason can be given why this should not be required of them immediately; or why any thing less or lower than this, even unholy duties, should be required at all. Mr. M., through a great part of his book, goes on the supposition that the unregenerate are not wholly to blame for not embracing the gospel, and doing holy duties; had he not supposed this, we never should have heard of his unregenerate duties, and of

their honest attempts, and doing their utmost in the exercise of such principles as they have, etc.

3. Mr. M. does fully yield the point to the objector in what he says here. According to his own concession, God's command has no respect to the fault of the creature, but requires what is strictly his duty. Surely then he requires holiness, for this is "strictly his duty;" and every thing short of this is the creature's fault. If God commands men to do duties without any regard to their moral deficiency, which is wholly their own fault, or making any allowance for it, then, in his commands, he makes no allowance for their unregeneraey; for this is a moral defect, and wholly their own fault, and therefore does not require unregenerate, unholy duties. It appears, therefore, that Mr. M. had no other way to answer the objection, but by giving up what was objected against, and granting that no unregenerate duties, nothing unholy and impure is required, but real holiness, which is in all cases "strictly the creature's duty."

But let us attend to the similitude he brings to illustrate this matter. "To make this mistake plain to the meanest capacity, suppose a father correcting his son for disobedient, rebellious behavior, should, in the close, require him to bow his head, in token of reverence and submission to his parental authority; the son, through unsubdued perverseness of temper, bows in hypocrisy. Does the father, by commanding the duty, command the sin? Far be it. And much less in the present case."

I think he has, by this similitude, "made it plain to the meanest capacity" that he has entirely given up his cause, and expressly asserts the contrary, viz., that God does not require what sinners do while under the dominion of "unsubdued perverseness." If the father requires the son to bow his head "in token of reverence and submission to his parental authority," and in no other way, the son does not obey this command in the least degree; therefore does no duty, nothing that the father commands; but his bowing his head in hypocrisy, in the exercise of unsubdued perverseness, is so far from being an act of obedience, that it is an exercise and act of high rebellion, and only serves to offend and provoke the father; as it is a daring attempt to impose upon him and mock him. Does Mr. M. think, and will he say, that acts of gross hypocrisy, in the exercise of "unsubdued perverseness," are the creature's duty, and acts of obedience, and that God commands these? And that these are less sinful and more acceptable in God's sight than the neglect of them? This is a very ill-chosen similitude for Mr. M., and will, I doubt not,

make it "plain to the meanest capacity" that his notion of unregenerate duties is very absurd, and that he here asserts that such are not required; but that God in all cases requires submission to him, and proper tokens and expressions of this, and nothing else.

And, by the way, I desire it may be considered, whether the son who, under the father's correction and reproofs, continues in the exercise of "unsubdued perverseness," and bows his head in hypocrisy, is not more guilty and vile than he was before his father took him in hand. If so, which I conclude Mr. M. himself will allow, then he has, by bringing this instance to represent the case of the unregenerate, not only given up the point he brought it to support, but also must allow that they do not become less sinful, but more guilty and vile in the use of means, while they persist in their "unsubdued perverseness," under all the light and conviction they have; and so has here really given up the whole which he undertook to support. Had Mr. M. constantly viewed the unregenerate in the light in which he sets them here, my section on means could not have given him such great offence.

But let us see if he has succeeded any better in his other attempt to answer this objection. He says the sin the unregenerate are guilty of in what they do, "is no part of the duty as required by God, does not belong to its essence, but arises from man's deficiency. God has a right to require of his people good duties. When he puts them under gospel advantages, etc., he requires gospel holiness. A prevalent indisposition of heart, and disinclination of will to do right, makes no abatement in God's demands of us, or in the duty we owe to God." Here again he expressly gives up the whole, and asserts that what God requires is, good duties, gospel holiness, and not unregenerate duties. Thus he shifts, gives up his cause, and turns against himself. He labors abundantly to prove that God requires of the unregenerate something which is not holiness, but those doings which they may perform with "unsubdued perverseness" of heart. And when he is told that that is to require that which is sin, he turns about and says, God requires nothing but "good duties, gospel holiness;" and so gets rid of the objection by unsaying all he had so often and zealously asserted before, against which the objection yet remains in its full force.

But he goes on: "Thus stands the case; God puts his covenant people under advantages to bring forth good fruits, and then he has a just right, expects, and demands them. God requires good duties of his people; both the performance and the goodness of the duty is absolutely required; and, therefore,

God will have the duties or performances, though through their badness they come marred out of their hands. Does God, in requiring these duties, require their being marred? Far be it, since he absolutely required their being good." Here he is in the same strain yet. God requires nothing but "good fruits, good duties," and, therefore, not the marred, sinful duties of the unregenerate; exercises and fruits of "unsubdued perverseness;" they never do the duty which God requires of them. When he says, "Both the performance and the goodness of the duty is absolutely required, and, therefore, God will have the duties or performances, though through their badness they come marred out of their hands," I think he is quite unintelligible, or at least supposes something which is very absurd and self-contradictory. The distinction between the performance of duty and the goodness of it, is, I suppose, quite new, and so nice that I question whether it can be understood. There is no other duty that I can conceive of, but good duty. The goodness of the duty comes into the performance, and is, indeed, one and the same thing; the performance is doing the good duty; and where there is no goodness exercised there is no performance of duty. Therefore, when he says, "God will have the duties or performances though marred by them," it is to me the same as if he had said, God will have the duties, whether he has them or not; or though they are wholly withheld.

If by the performance as distinguished from the goodness, he means only the external action, without any relation or regard to the exercises of the heart, I suppose enough has been said to show the absurdity of such a way of talking.

SECTION II.

Mr. Mills's Arguments for the Affirmative examined.

Mr. Mills's arguments are quite miscellaneous; they are interspersed through near a hundred pages, without any particular order, in which he does not attend constantly to this subject, but often goes off to other matters, and then returns again to this, and repeats the things he has said before, over and over again. I shall pick them out as well as I can, as they lie scattered through this part of his performance.

1. Mr. M. attempts to prove this by a number of texts of Scripture, which he thinks expressly enjoin duty on the unregenerate to be done by them while under the dominion of sin, being enemies to God, and to all holiness. He observes, "Our Savior expressly enjoins sinners to search the Scriptures, as a

means in order to come to the knowledge of him as Mediator. (John v. 39.) To seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. (Mat. vi. 33.) To labor for the meat that endureth to everlasting life. (John vi. 27.) And to strive to enter in at the strait gate. (Luke xiii. 24.)

Ans. 1. Our Savior does not direct the Jews to search the Scriptures with all their prejudices, and in the exercise of enmity against him, and with a desire and design to prove from them that he was an impostor. This, I trust, neither Mr. M. nor any one else will assert or allow. But there is just as much evidence that he directed them to search the Scriptures thus, as there is that he directed them to do it as enemies to his character and doctrines. They ought to have searched the Scriptures with a heart ready to embrace and practise the truth whatever they found it to be; and, therefore, our Savior doubtless enjoins this on them, which he knew they would not do so long as they continued to hate both him and the Father that sent him. Christ told them that, "If any man will do his will (i. e., is disposed and inclined to do the will of God,) he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." (John vii. 17.) And when he tells them to search the Scriptures in order to determine this, he directs them to do it with such an inclination; and not with a disposition directly opposite to that which was necessary in order to answer the end proposed.

Mr. M. observes that Christ directs them to search the Scriptures "as a means in order to come to the knowledge of him as Mediator." This is granted: but it does not follow that he enjoins them to do this with a wicked heart, but with a right temper and disposition of mind; for the latter was necessary in order to come to the true knowledge of Christ as Mediator. And, as has been observed, it was their indispensable duty as well as interest to search the Scriptures with such a disposition of mind.

Ans. 2. The word in the original, translated *search*, in the imperative mood, may be as well rendered *ye do search*. It is thus translated by most of the noted critics on the original; and this translation is thought to be confirmed by the following verse; the sense of the two verses being this: "Ye take much pains to search the Scriptures, because ye think ye have eternal life in them. This is very true, and I am the life here revealed; and yet, so perverse and blind are you, that while ye are paying such great regard to the Scriptures, ye reject me, and will not come to me that ye may have the life there revealed."

Ans. 3. When Christ directs and commands to seek first the kingdom of God, etc., and labor for the meat that endures

to everlasting life, he doubtless directs to that seeking and labor by which men will certainly obtain what they seek and labor after. There is certainly not the least evidence that he does not; or that by seeking and laboring he means any exercises and doings of men unregenerate. I see not why Mr. M. might not with as much propriety and reason have quoted every direction and command of our Savior that is recorded, as requiring unregenerate doings, and nothing but such.

And it is to be particularly observed that there is an express promise made to them who seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, — "all these things shall be added unto you." This is beyond all question a promise of the covenant of grace, to that godliness which has the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. (1 Tim. iv. 8.) As to the words, "strive to enter in at the strait gate," these have been particularly considered before, and also the remarkable argument which Mr. M. here uses to prove that they mean the strivings of the unregenerate; to which the reader is referred.

Mr. M. proceeds: "And is not the sinner that finds the pearl, plainly represented as being a seeker, previous to his finding it?" (Matt. xiii. 45, 46.)

Ans. 1. If it is granted that the unregenerate sinner seeks after Christ and salvation, this is not to the purpose; for he may do this, and yet obey no command nor do any duty. How, then, came Mr. M. to think that this was in the least to the point he was upon?

Ans. 2. The merchant seeking goodly pearls is not designed to represent a man unregenerate, but one who is as much prepared in the temper of his mind, as much disposed to embrace Jesus Christ as his only Savior and portion, as the greedy merchant is to prize and purchase a precious pearl; and who can this be but a person regenerate? All that Christ means to represent by this similitude is, the temper and exercises with which men embrace him and become members of his kingdom, or, in his language, receive the kingdom of God. They love and prize him so as to forsake all for him. On the whole, then, Mr. M. has proved nothing by producing this text, unless it be that he looks on the unregenerate, not as enemies to Christ, but as being as much disposed to embrace Christ and part with all for him, as is the merchant, who is in pursuit of pearls, to part with his whole estate to purchase a pearl of great price; — a notion which he has kept in view through his whole book, and on which it is, in a measure, all built, as has been observed, however contrary to the whole tenor of Scripture.

The next passage of Scripture Mr. M. produces in the following words: "And does not God complain of his people, that they will not frame their doings to turn unto their God? (Hos. v. 4.) Sure this must be something previous to a saving repentance, and something that God required; otherwise they had not been blamed for the neglect of it; for where there is no law there is no transgression."

Ans. 1. The Hebrew word here translated *frame*, properly signifies to *give*, or *grant*, and is often translated *to suffer*, or *permit;* and these words may be rendered thus: Their pursuits, or their evil ways, will not suffer them to turn to the Lord. That is, the sins in which they live are in the way of their turning to the Lord, and do with the greatest strength and obstinacy oppose it. This sense agrees well with the following words: "For the spirit of whoredoms is in the midst of them, and they have not known the Lord." The words set forth their great degree of corruption, by which they were at the greatest distance from turning to the Lord.

Ans. 2. The words as they stand in our translation, express much the same thing. The meaning of them is, that they were so far gone in wickedness, that they had not the least disposition or inclination to turn to the Lord; which is true of every unregenerate person; and the words do not suppose that while men continue perfectly wicked and obstinate enemies to God, they in any true sense frame their doings to turn to the Lord; because this is a gross contradiction, which Mr. M. and all who join with him have run into by putting such a sense upon them. Mr. M., therefore, had no warrant to say, "Sure this must be something previous to a saving repentance." On this assertion all the weight of his argument from these words rests, which he has not said one word to support; and indeed it could not be supported by him, had he attempted it, for it surely rests on a sandy foundation.

Mr. M. goes on: "And does not St. Paul clearly point out attendance on the word preached, as a means in order to faith? So, then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word preached," (Rom. x. 17;) (*by the word of God*, it should be.)

Answer. All that is asserted here is, that it is impossible that men should believe that of which they never heard; that the truths to be believed by men in order to salvation are contained in divine revelation, and that none can believe these, unless he hears them. It follows from this, that hearing or attending to the truths of divine revelation is necessary in order to faith in Christ. But how are they to hear? Not with a disposition to hate Christ and all divine truth, as soon as it comes to their notice; but as Cornelius heard St. Paul, with a

disposition and readiness of mind to receive the truth in love and believe it. This is never done by the unregenerate. No unregenerate duties, therefore, can be inferred from these words.

Mr. M. adds: "And does not the apostle Peter expressly exhort Simon, being unregenerate, to pray? Repent, therefore, of this thy wickedness, and pray to God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee." (Acts viii. 22.)

ANSWER. Repentance is often spoken of in the New Testament and Old, and persons are often called upon to repent; and when spoken of as connected with forgiveness of sins, and the condition of this, it always has one determinate precise meaning, even a turning from sin to God through Jesus Christ. St. Peter received orders from his master at the last interview he had with him, to preach repentance and remission of sins in his name, (Luke xxiv. 47;) and we find him obeying his orders, and saying to a large auditory when waiting on him to know what they had to do, "Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins." (Acts ii. 38.) And to another, "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." (Acts iii. 19.) And we have no account of his, or of any of the rest of the apostles directing any one to do any thing short of repentance and conversion; or speaking of forgiveness of sins in any other connection but with true repentance and conversion. It would, therefore, be very strange and quite unaccountable, if when St. Peter directs Simon to repent of his wickedness, and that with a view to obtain forgiveness, he uses the word *repent* in a different and opposite sense from that in which his Lord and Master had expressly commanded him to use it, and different from that in which he had used it before on like occasions, and as it never is used in another instance in all the New Testament. If, therefore, these words of St. Peter can, without doing manifest violence to them, be understood consistent with the orders which he had received from Christ, and with his way of addressing men on such occasions in all other instances, we may be certain we have the true sense of them; and may with confidence reject any other sense that any have devised.

I therefore observe, Simon is not directed to pray as an impenitent sinner, but as a penitent. "Repent of this thy wickedness, and pray to God." Is not the meaning of these words as plain as those are when this same apostle says, "Repent and be converted; repent and be baptized"? These words have been long quoted as an incontestable proof that unregenerate men are commanded to pray as impenitent and unregenerate; and many have done it without ever observing that the word *repent* was to be found in the text. Whereas, directly the

contrary is most evidently true. As well might we overlook the word *repent* in the other passages mentioned, and say St. Peter commanded his hearers to be baptized; yea, to be converted, as impenitent, unregenerate sinners; and hence infer that to be baptized and converted are duties that the unregenerate are to do while such. With good reason, therefore, I think, Dr. Doddridge says, in his note on this text, "One would think that none could be so wild as to imagine faith in Christ was not included in that repentance and prayer which an apostle preaches to a baptized person as the way of obtaining forgiveness."

The only difficulty in the words is, that St. Peter does not here speak of forgiveness of sin, as certainly connected with the repentance and prayer to which he exhorts Simon, which he does in the other instances mentioned; and it is certain that he who prays as a true penitent shall be forgiven; whereas it is here said, "*If perhaps* the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee." Mr. M. and others have insisted upon this as an argument that the prayer, not of a true penitent, but of an impenitent, unregenerate sinner is here exhorted to.

Upon this, it may be observed, that the words *if perhaps* are not designed to express the uncertainty of his obtaining forgiveness if he should repent of his wickedness and pray to God, as he was exhorted to do; but the doubtfulness and uncertainty whether there was forgiveness for this his sin, and so whether he would repent and pray. Simon had been guilty of a sin, which it was to be feared was the sin against the Holy Ghost, for which there was no forgiveness, or at least was bordering upon it; and it is in this view that St. Peter puts in the words "if perhaps." As if he had said, "If there is room left for repentance and pardon in this case, which perhaps there is not." Thus the peculiar circumstances of Simon's case, rendering it doubtful whether there was any forgiveness for his sin, are the only reason why the apostle puts in these words "if perhaps," which we find he did not in other cases.

Dr. Doddridge understands the words in this sense, and gives the reason of it in the following words: "The dubious manner in which he speaks of his being forgiven, intimates, not that his sincere repentance might possibly fail of acceptance, — for that is contrary to the whole tenor of the gospel, — but that after the commission of a sin so nearly approaching blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, there was little reason to hope he would ever be brought truly to repent." And though I do not quote the doctor as an authority, yet I may be allowed, perhaps, to quote another author as such, at least as one of

sufficient authority with Mr. M., as it is no less a one than Mr. Mills himself. He says, "This 'perhaps,' as here used, imports, indeed, only a suspicion of the truth of the man's repentance, and not any doubt of God's forgiveness in case his repentance were sincere." This he wrote above twenty years ago; and I think it is a pity he has, in his old age, given this up, and espoused a sense which is attended with insuperable difficulties.

But if this sense should not be satisfying to all, there is another which some have espoused, that I will mention. The words in the original, translated "if perhaps," do not appear to have this signification, and denote doubtfulness or a *perhaps*, at least not always; but are used only as expletives, without any particular meaning, taken by themselves; or else are used to make the assertion more strong and emphatical. According to this, the words should have been translated, "Repent, etc., that the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee," or "may indeed be forgiven." The same words, in the original, are used in the first verse of the preceding chapter, by the high priest, in his question to Stephen, translated, "Are these things so?" where it would, at best, make a poor sense, to translate them as they are here: "*If perhaps*, are these things so?" And it is to be observed that these same particles are found in the Septuagint, in Ps. lviii. 1–5, which, in our translation, stands thus: "Do ye *indeed* seek righteousness," etc.

And now I leave it to the reader, whether either of these senses is not much more easy and natural than that which Mr. M. has put upon the words, which involves us in the inextricable difficulties which have been mentioned? I am confident that it will appear to all who well attend to this matter, that this text is by no means a sufficient foundation to build a doctrine upon which has no shadow of support from any other passage of Scripture, and which, indeed, is repugnant to the whole run of Scripture, and most apparently contrary to the express assertions of Christ and St. Paul, as has been shown; especially if what has been observed be kept in view, that to put this sense upon the text is to make the apostle speak a language which he never uses before or after, or any of the other apostles, and is directly contrary to the orders which Christ gave them; and that when another sense free of all these difficulties offers itself.

If they who now hold that the impenitent enemies of God and the gospel are commanded to do many impenitent, unregenerate duties, would be as silent about it as were the apostles, we should not hear much of this doctrine, if at all, and it would do very little hurt, and, to be sure, as little good.

Mr. M. says something else, which perhaps he intends as an argument for the sense of the text which he contends for, and therefore must not be neglected. His words are, "It is evident, therefore, that as the apostle knew he was a sinner, so he expected from him the prayer of a sinner." If there is any thing in this argument, it takes its force from this supposition, viz., that whatsoever is said to an impenitent, unregenerate sinner by way of exhortation or command, can require or propose nothing but what he may do and yet continue impenitent and unregenerate. Therefore, every exhortation and command in the Bible directed to such, requires nothing but impenitent, unregenerate doings. And, because this supposition is taken to be an undeniable maxim, and is built upon as such, not only by Mr. M. but others, I will take leave particularly to consider it here, and observe these following things: —

I. If this maxim is true, then another is as true, viz., that it is not the duty of the impenitent, unregenerate, to repent and believe the gospel; nothing is to be required of them but what they may do under the influence of the disposition and principles by which they are now governed. For if any thing more than this is their duty, more is certainly required of them, and they may and must be commanded and exhorted to do more, even to repent and embrace the gospel. According to this, therefore, the unregenerate and impenitent are not to blame in the least for being so, or for not loving God and embracing the gospel, but only for neglecting to do unregenerate duties; or those which they may do consistent with being enemies to Christ and continuing in impenitence and unbelief. If the unregenerate are commanded to repent and love God, for instance, these commands, as they respect them, only require the attempts and endeavors to repent and love God, which the impenitent enemies of God may exert, and yet continue in their impenitence and enmity against God. Thus, if St. Peter's knowing that Simon was an impenitent sinner was a good reason why he should not exhort him to repent and pray to God as an impenitent never does, it must be because it was not his duty thus to repent and pray, and so he could not be exhorted and commanded to do it.*

* This appears to be Mr. M.'s notion of the matter, by the tenor of his book, and by the sense he puts on the words of St. Peter to Simon, as will be seen under the next argument; though there are a few expressions in it contrary to this. He seems to think the duty of the unregenerate lies wholly in unregenerate doings, and not in loving God, etc. Therefore, all the commands and exhortations to them are to strive to love God, etc., or to make those attempts which persons unregenerate may do while such; and he takes for granted

II. It also follows from this, that sinners may not be exhorted and commanded to do any thing from higher and better views, disposition, or principles, than those which they now actually have. The only reason why the impenitent enemies to God may not be exhorted to repent and love God, if there is any reason for this, is, that this requires higher principles than those which they now act from; or, in other words, they have no heart, disposition, or inclination to repent and love God, but their hearts are inclined to that which is directly the reverse of this, as what they choose and prefer. And for the same reason, no person may be exhorted and commanded to do any thing which his heart is now set against, and is not in the least inclined to do; which, therefore, he will not do till he has a different disposition and turn of mind, and views things in a different and better light than he now does. If it was not proper for St. Peter to exhort Simon truly to repent and become a friend to Christ, and pray as such, because he knew he was an impenitent enemy of Christ; and if we may hence safely infer that he did not exhort him to this, we may for the same reason infer that he did not exhort him to repent and pray from any higher views and motives than merely worldly ones; for he had as much evidence that he was wholly under the influence of worldly motives as he had that he was an impenitent sinner.

And when Christ exhorted the Jews to labor for the meat which endureth unto everlasting life; if their being unholy and perfectly disinclined to any thing truly good is any reason and evidence that he does not exhort them to any thing inconsistent with this perverse, prevailing temper and disposition of their hearts, (and such an argument has been gravely offered to the public by those who would not choose to have their talent at clear reasoning called in question;) I say, if this is so, then, since they were so low and sordid in their views and aims as to be influenced to follow him purely that they might get their fill of bread, we may safely infer that Christ did not in these words exhort them to any thing that they might not do under the influence of such low, carnal views and motives; and that he does not really exhort them to seek any other bread but that with which they might fill their bellies, however his words may seem, at first view, to imply something more.

III. Yea, it hence follows, that men are never to be com-

that if they are not required to do unregenerate duties, nothing is required of them. He is not alone in this; many preachers and writers have represented the matter in the same light; yet I trust neither Mr. M., nor any of them, will expressly undertake a vindication of this notion.

manded or exhorted to any thing which is contrary to their present prevailing will and inclination; for, if their prevailing inclination in one case is a good reason why they may not be exhorted and commanded to that which is contrary to it, it is as good a reason in any other case of this kind whatsoever. Therefore, according to this principle, if we knew what were the precise inclinations of Simon's heart when St. Peter spoke those words to him, we may determine what he did, and what he did not, exhort him to, as well as we can know that he did not exhort him to any thing contrary to the inclination and heart of an impenitent, unregenerate sinner. And we may be sure Simon was fully inclined to repent of his wickedness, and pray to God, in the sense in which the apostle directed him to do it, and actually complied with the exhortation, else he would not have exhorted him to it.

According to this, no man can be directed and commanded to do that which is contrary to his inclination and heart, or which he is not willing to do; which is the same as to say, no man can be under any law at all but his own inclination and will, which, in all cases, must be the law and rule of his conduct; and so long as he does as he pleases, he transgresses no law, and so commits no sin. The consequence is, there can be no such thing in nature as sin and blame; for all men always do as they please, or act according to the inclination of their own hearts. All these absurdities, I think, are evidently contained in the maxim under consideration, which Mr. M. and others seem to take for granted, and build much upon.

Mr. M. goes on to produce two other texts, but seems here to have shifted his point, and instead of attempting to prove by them that there are duties enjoined on the impenitent, to be done by them while they remain so, he seeks only to prove that there are encouragements to such to use means. One of these is in the following words: "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord." (Hos. vi. 3.) He says, "How, as the body of the people, by far the greater number comprehended in the pronoun *we* were undoubtedly sinners, destitute of the true knowledge of God, as the words plainly hold forth, can any thing less be understood by these expressions, — 'if we follow on to know,' — than that the only encouragement sinners destitute of the saving knowledge of God have of attaining to it, is a persevering attendance on all God's appointed means, as sinners, until by grace they become successful?" Upon this it may be observed, —

1. This text rises much higher than encouragement; it contains an express promise to them that follow on to know. So that if following on to know means the doings of the

unregenerate, as Mr. M. says it does, there are promises to the doings of the unregenerate. I wonder he did not observe this. Did he forget that he had wrote a book to prove the contrary, and had rendered his public thanks to me for finishing this debate? He may now thank himself for giving this point up; for he has certainly contradicted all this, by saying the unregenerate follow on to know the Lord, and that these words are spoken of such. He has now got on the other side of the question, and found an express promise to unregenerate doings, and might as well have applied all the promises in the Bible to them. What reason, what right had he to lower down this promise, and call it only an encouragement?

2. There is not the least evidence that the persons into whose mouths these words are put have the character of impenitent, unregenerate sinners; but the contrary is most evident. The whole, from the first verse to this, is the language of God's people, submitting and returning to him, under his corrections; and represents that temper of mind, and those exercises which ought to take place, and do actually take place, in the truly penitent, and which are connected with deliverance and divine favor.

I. The other text which he mentions here is this: "I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." (Ezek. xxxvi. 37.) He quotes this here, not as commanding a duty, but only as an encouragement to the unregenerate. He expressly says, "The words are spoken in the way of a prediction or prophecy, and showed them what God had absolutely, not conditionally, determined to accomplish for his people." What God does reveal as a promise of what he will do, cannot be considered as a command. Whether the inquiry here spoken of points out the prayers and seeking of the unregenerate, I particularly considered in my remarks on Dr. Mayhew's sermons, and suppose I produced evidence that it does not. Mr. M. has a large note on this text, to prove that I have misunderstood it as well as the doctor. But to this I shall have something to say in another place.

II. Mr. M. forms another argument from the encouragement which is given in the Word of God to sinners to attend on means. He argues, that "from the encouragement set before Simon to repent and pray, i. e., to attempt the performance of those duties, though on no higher principles than that of natural conscience, which encouragement stands good to all the unregenerate, under the external light and advantages of the gospel, it is evident that God doth some way require these essays of the unregenerate; otherwise he encourages them to that in his worship, which he no way, in any sense, requires in

his word. Would not this be for the Almighty to encourage his creatures to practise will-worship, and the inventions of men, which God every where condemns in his word as utterly sinful? And can it agree to the purity of his nature to encourage his creatures to that which is utterly sinful? Sure it cannot. It must, therefore, hence clearly follow, that the unregenerate, under the light and advantages of the gospel, are some way required to make these essays, to repent, pray," etc.

On these words, I observe, —

1. If the words of St. Peter to Simon are not a command to him to repent and pray in an unregenerate manner, or as an impenitent enemy to God, which Mr. M. has insisted they are, then they are not a command to do any thing, as an impenitent. Mr. M. has remarkably lowered down here, and considers these words, not as an express command or exhortation to do any thing, but only as an encouragement set before Simon to attempt to repent and pray; not a command really to do them. He might just as reasonably construe away all the commands in the Bible, and represent them to be nothing but encouragements to attempt to do something.

2. The sinner who is utterly impenitent never does truly attempt to repent and pray as a penitent. He never has the least motion of heart or will this way; for his whole heart is, by the supposition, in direct opposition to this; therefore, the more he exercises himself about it, or the more exercises he has, the more he opposes it. We may, therefore, be sure that the Scripture nowhere says any thing to encourage such attempts to repent, which are consistent with perfect impenitence and enmity against God; because there are not in nature any such attempts; and such a supposition involves the most gross contradiction; such a notion never existed, except in the minds of those who suppose that the unregenerate are penitent and friendly to God and the gospel in a degree; or of those who are absurd enough to hold that the perfectly impenitent and enemies to God are inclined to repent, and disposed to be friendly to him. Mr. M. is to be ranked among both these, for he supposes each of these in their turns.

3. It is difficult, I think, to know what Mr. M. means by "will-worship, and the inventions of men," as applied to the case before us. If by this he means something external, ways of worship and conduct which men invent and practise to express their devotion and respect to God, which I suppose is the sense in which these phrases are commonly used, they are not applicable to this case; for it is not pretended by any one that the unregenerate, or any other, are urged to any such

thing. If he means any motions and exercises of the heart that are neither right nor wrong in themselves, neither sinful nor holy, these are indeed "the inventions of men," — of Mr. M. at least; for there are in reality no such, which are not holy, and yet not utterly sinful.

All the seeming force and plausibleness in what Mr. M. says here, if there seems to be any, lies in the ambiguity of the word *encouragement*, which may be taken in different senses, and is often used so.

To *encourage*, sometimes means to invite, urge, and exhort a person to something; urging him to it by good reasons and motives. In this sense, God's encouragements and commands cannot be distinguished; for where there is such encouragement, there is a command, implied or expressed.

Sometimes encouragement means that which gives a hope and prospect of success in any business and pursuit; and when we say a person has encouragement to do this or the other thing, we mean that this is the most likely way to obtain his end which he is pursuing; and to encourage him to any particular way of conduct, is to let him know that this is the most hopeful way to miss of the evil he dreads, and obtain what he sets up as the object of his pursuit, be that what it will.

In the first sense of encouragement mentioned, God encourages men to holiness, and nothing else. In the last sense, he encourages men, let their hearts be as sinful and opposite to him as they will, to attend on the means of grace. He has so ordered things that this is the most likely way to escape the greatest evil and be happy forever; so that when they come to view things in any measure as they are, and are above all things afraid of eternal destruction, and desirous of future happiness, they will be induced from a principle of self-love, or selfishness, even that very principle which sets their hearts against God, and leads them into all the wickedness they practise, with great care and anxiety to attend on these means. The whole encouragement, as laid before them, lies in its being the most hopeful and likely way to promote their interest and answer the end which they are pursuing. God has so contrived and ordered things, that whenever the sinner's conscience is thoroughly awakened and convinced, and he comes to a sense of the wretchedness of his case, and attends to what is contained in divine revelation, and labors under no particular delusion, he will forsake those ways in which secure sinners live, and pursue the most likely way to obtain deliverance and eternal salvation, however vile his heart is, and though he is a greater enemy to God, and all that is good now, than he was

before; and thus there is encouragement to all this, and this is the encouragement God sets before the sinner; and a person may be "utterly sinful," that is, inclined to nothing else but sin; yea, may be growing more and more guilty and vile continually, and yet take this encouragement and act upon it.

He who will consider these things, must be sensible, I think, that the encouragement sinners have to attend on means is consistent with their obeying no command, and doing no duty, while they act under the influence of this encouragement; and that God may, and does, consistently with the purity of his nature, encourage his creatures to that, in doing which they are utterly sinful; and that Mr. M. has confused himself by using the word *encouragement* in an indeterminate or wrong sense, as many others have done. Yea, I think it will be evident to such a reader, that the passage I am considering is so far from proving any thing, that it is quite unintelligible, and contains in it as many absurdities, at least, as there are sentences.

Before I leave this head about encouragement, I would observe, that when Mr. M. undertakes to show what encouragement there is to sinners, on his plan of commands to do unregenerate duties, he seems to have a right notion of encouragement; but finds no more than they do who teach the unregenerate that they do no duty while they continue so, and places it upon the same bottom they do, in the words following: "To all who with earnest concern thus attend on God's appointed means, the language of Scripture encouragement is, May be God will be gracious; who can tell, if perhaps sovereign grace may be displayed for your help, in this way? It implies in it that God is a God of infinite goodness; can exercise his mercy towards them through Christ in this way consistent with the honor of all his other perfections; and that they are in some measure in the way in which he is wont to bestow mercy on perishing sinners whenever he does bestow it; the way in which millions have found mercy, and the way out of which he has determined, in the ordinary dispensation of his grace, not to bestow it." I have endeavored particularly to show that the sinner has all this encouragement in the use of means, in my tenth section; and when he again undertakes to show "the usefulness and importance" of the truth he contends for, he mentions nothing but what is consistent with the doctrine he is opposing.

III. Another of Mr. M.'s arguments is in the following words: "Again, it is further evident that the unregenerate are otherwise required to attend on the means of grace than merely by being called upon to repent and believe in a

gospel sense; because if they are not, then none of the unregenerate would be required to attend on the means of grace until they had attained to a competency of speculative knowledge in order to saving faith; since till then they are under a natural impossibility of believing, and so of being immediately required to believe; and since the gospel does not require any natural impossibility as the condition of life, it must thence clearly follow, upon this principle, they are not required to attend on means at all." *

ANSWER. The Word of God requires sinners to be always so friendly to him at heart as to be disposed and ready to believe every truth which he reveals and proposes to them, and to have exercises answerable to that truth, or to receive the love of the truth. They are under no natural impossibility of doing this. If they do this they will not attend on means, as do the impenitent and unregenerate; therefore, they are not required to attend on means in any one instance as such, or with an impenitent, unbelieving heart. Mr. M. says, very agreeable to truth, "God does not make the depraved will of the creature the rule of his duty, but requires him to reach the appointed end. Make you a new heart and a new spirit, for why will ye die? Turn yourselves, and live ye." And he allows that all under the gospel are required to pray, and do all other duties in a gracious manner; which, he will not deny, implies faith. How came he, just now, in direct contradiction to this, to say all are not immediately required to believe? God does not require men to believe any truth which never has been proposed to them, and which they have had no opportunity to understand; but he requires them to attend to every truth set before them, and receive it with a penitent heart and in the exercise of love to him.

It is true, there are many under the gospel who have not that speculative knowledge necessary in order to their exercising faith in Christ; but this is wholly their own fault, owing entirely to their depraved wills. Were their hearts as they ought to be, they would understand and receive every truth as soon as proposed to them; and this is required of them, and nothing less. If they did so, they would in no instance attend on means as do impenitent unbelievers. Though God will not give them a new heart, and bring them to a right temper and disposition

* I would here just observe, that I believe Mr. M. will not be able to prove one thing which he here asserts, viz., that there is a natural impossibility in requiring men to do what is naturally impossible to them. There is no more natural impossibility in doing this than there is in requiring any thing else, however unreasonable it may be. I know not why Mr. M. asserted this, since, if it was true, it is nothing to his purpose.

of mind, while they are inattentive and ignorant, yet he always requires that disposition of mind which is inconsistent with their inattention and ignorance; for, as he does not make the depraved will of sinners the rule of their duty, so he does not make the rule of their duty the rule of his conduct, in giving or not giving a new heart. Mr. M. says, "If there be some under the gospel that are destitute of it," (i. e., of a competency of speculative knowledge, in order to faith,) "as not having opportunity and advantages for acquiring of it, they are not required to attend on means of grace at all." That is, on my plan. I answer, there is no such instance. All under the gospel have this opportunity and advantage, and their ignorance, impenitence, and unbelief is their own fault. Were they, in any measure, as God requires them to be, they would have understood the truth when first proposed, that is, as soon as they became moral agents, in the exercise of love, repentance, and faith.

If persons under the gospel were not required to attend on means until, with all their depravity, stupidity, and dulness, they had obtained a good degree of speculative knowledge, and could not be required to repent and believe till in a long course of the use of means they had attained to this, how can we account for our Savior's calling upon men, when he first began to preach to them, to "repent and believe the gospel"? And why did the apostles direct men immediately to repent and be converted, and believe on Jesus Christ? If they might preach so to persons who had much less opportunity and advantage to get speculative knowledge than all under the gospel now have, surely this may be required of all now. And this is a pattern which all preachers of the gospel ought to follow, and not to devise another way of preaching and addressing sinners; calling upon them to do a set of duties short of repentance and faith, under the notion that the latter are not yet their duty. The truths of the gospel ought to be clearly preached and set before sinners; and one truth is, that they are required to repent and believe the gospel as soon as proposed, and that he that believeth not shall be damned.

IV. Mr. M. undertakes to prove that the unregenerate are required to do duty in an ungracious manner; or, as he expresses it, "though they fail and come short of a gracious manner," by asserting and attempting to prove that the regenerate, or children of God, are required to do duties in this manner.

The argument stands thus: Duties are required of the regenerate, or true Christian, which they must, and often do, conscientiously perform, though they have no gracious or holy

exercises, but come wholly short of the least degree of love to God or man. Therefore, the same duties are required of the unregenerate, as they may do them without any grace, as well as the regenerate, and as no truly good and holy exercises of heart are necessary or required in order to perform them.

I suppose this argument is quite new, and that Mr. M., in advancing it, is perfectly an original; and, therefore, that I shall be the first that ever attempted to answer it. Indeed, it appears to me to want no great matter of an answer.

In this argument, Mr. M. supposes not only that a principle of grace may be perfectly dormant and unactive in the true Christian, so that in this respect he may not differ at all from him who is ignorant of Jesus Christ, and perfectly impenitent, and obstinately hates his whole character; but that such may and actually do conscientiously attend on the duties of the first and second table, and use conscientious and painful endeavors, and their utmost efforts to do them in a gracious manner, or in the exercise of true love to God and man, and yet not have the least degree of such exercise, but fall wholly short of it in all they do, having nothing better in their heart, or more like true Christian holiness, than the impenitent unbeliever may have; and that when this is the case they do that duty which God requires of them. Such suppositions as these, I conclude, will appear not only weak and absurd, but very whimsical and ridiculous, to the judicious reader; and more so as they are represented in Mr. M.'s book than in this abridgment.

I have often heard them tell of dead Christians; by which I suppose they mean Christians who have no exercises of grace at some seasons. But such must be very dead indeed; I should think "twice dead, and plucked up by the roots," who, when they strain so hard, conscientiously take so much pains, and exert their repeated and utmost endeavor to call up and put forth the exercise of grace, are not able to produce the least spark or motion of this kind. Mr. M. puts his Christian to as hard a task as Elijah did the prophets of Baal; he may "cry aloud," be in the greatest earnest, and put forth his utmost endeavors and efforts to wake up or recall his grace; but it is either too fast asleep to be awaked, or is gone on a journey, and so cannot be recalled. However, he gives him more consolation than those prophets had; for if the Christian utterly fails in his conscientious attempt, and remains as graceless as he who has no grace, he will not lose his pains, seeing he, after all, does his duty.

But what are these conscientious endeavors to exercise grace, or to perform duties in a gracious manner? Do they imply

any inclination of heart towards holiness, or any actual idea, or liking of that in which holiness consists? No; for this is the exercise of grace. They must, therefore, consist in exercises of heart directly opposite to holiness, or in exercises and endeavors which are neutral; neither inclined nor tending to the exercise of grace, nor to that which is unfriendly and contrary to it. The former cannot be meant, I conclude. Nor can they consist in the latter, for two reasons: First, there are in nature no such exercises and conscientious endeavors, which are perfectly and equally indifferent towards holiness and sin, and imply no inclination to one or the other. Secondly, if there could be any such, they would be no more endeavors to do duty in a gracious manner than in an ungracious and sinful manner; because, by the supposition, there is no more of an inclination or tendency to the former than to the latter.

The Scripture gives us a quite different idea of the Christian from this which Mr. M. has set before us. According to that, the Christian is wholly made up of flesh and spirit, two different and opposite principles, and the latter is as constantly exercised as the former, and is no more dead or asleep than the former, though it may be exercised in a weak and low degree. "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary one to the other." (Gal. v. 17.) The spirit is never said to be dead; but, on the contrary, the Christian has "crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts," (Gal. v. 24;) and "the law of the spirit of life has made him free from the law of sin and death." (Rom. viii. 2.) And there is not one word said in the Bible about these graceless duties of Christians, not one exhortation to them, or the least hint about them in all the New Testament, where there are such a number of letters wrote to Christians, and so many directions and precepts given to them. I am confident, and every one else will be so, I trust, that Mr. M.'s regenerate, dead, graceless Christian has no existence in the New Testament nor in nature, the character he gives of such a one being quite unscriptural, and in itself a contradiction.

Mr. M.'s representation of this matter is not only unscriptural, but a fatal resting-place for many nominal Christians; a refuge of lies, in which many have doubtless perished. They think they are not to blame for not acting and doing duties in a "gracious manner." Grace is from God, and they can exercise no degree of this without the Spirit of God, which is not at their disposal, but is given or withheld as God pleases. They therefore rest in their good desires and endeavors, and what they call conscientious performance of duty, as all that is required of them, not considering that they are commanded

to be "filled with the Spirit," and always to live and walk in the Spirit, and bring forth the fruits of the Spirit; and that not to do so is to oppose and quench the Spirit, and to live after the flesh. Mr. M. expressly says, that if Christians, as well as the unregenerate, are not required to do duty not in "a gracious manner," or without the exercise of holiness, then "no Christian duty is required of us, but as we are moved by the Spirit, since this cannot be done but as moved and assisted by the Spirit." What can be the meaning of this, but that Christians are under no obligation to do duty in a gracious manner, unless when actually moved and influenced thereto by the Spirit of God, which, not being always the case, they are not at all to blame for not acting in "a gracious manner," but have only to wait till God shall move them by his Spirit? Sweet doctrine to many graceless Christians, and tends to fix them on the fatal rock on which multitudes are perishing.

The reason Mr. M. gives why these graceless, unregenerate duties are equally required of the regenerate and unregenerate, is remarkable, and worthy of particular notice here. He says, "God does not require these things because they have in them any positive virtue, or true moral goodness, but because of a negative moral goodness they have in them; i. e., the absence of a greater degree of true moral evil than there would be in the careless neglect of them." And again he says, the reason of the requirement of these performances is, "not because they are holy, but because they are less unholy. There is a less degree of true moral evil in the conscientious performance of them than in the contemptuous neglect of them, and therefore are they required." On this I have two things to observe, —

1. Mr. M. has here reduced his commands to mere prohibitions, in which God only forbids sin. And the duty he contends for is nothing but abstinence from sin, or not committing it; or rather, committing a less sin instead of a greater. Undoubtedly God forbids all sin, of every degree and kind; but this, I conceive, is quite different from commanding duty. Nor is every instance or degree of abstinence from sin, or of the non-commission of sin, doing duty, as Mr. M. here supposes. A tree or horse commits no sin; but none will say they do any duty. But a tree does as much duty as any man does in merely not committing sin; and a rock has as much "negative moral goodness" as the best man on earth, and much more; and so more of Mr. M.'s negative duty, as there is less moral evil; yea, the absence of every degree of moral evil.

I think Mr. M. has run into all this confusion and absurdity by confounding prohibitions with commands, and not distinguishing doing duty from merely not committing sin.

2. If every instance of abstaining from any sin, or greater degree of sin, that might be committed, is doing duty, as it is, according to Mr. M., then all men do some duty, something that God requires; for none commit all the sin that in nature is possible, and the sins of most are much less than those of the greatest sinner that ever lived: all these have, therefore, a great degree of "negative moral goodness," or the absence of a great degree of true moral evil. And the greatest sinner of all has a considerable degree of this sort of moral goodness; for it cannot be supposed that he is as great a sinner as is possible. Yea, will it not follow that most of mankind have much more moral goodness, and do much more duty, than sin? No individual commits half the sin that in nature is possible; and there are millions of sins actually committed of which he is not guilty. All his sins put together are as nothing to the sins of the whole world of mankind, and of all the fallen angels. Now, if his not committing all this is negative moral goodness and duty, his sin hardly bears any proportion to his goodness and duty.

And, according to Mr. M., every less sin, every sin except the greatest of all that ever was committed, or can be, is in some sense required of God, viz., as having a degree of negative moral goodness in it, or not being so bad and sinful as something else which might take place in its room. Consequently God requires and commands every sin in the universe, except it be the greatest of all; and even that too, if there is less moral evil in it than might have been, on any supposition. All these, I say, must be commanded for the same reason which Mr. M. gives for graceless duties being required; for "there is a less degree of true moral evil in them" than in the greatest possible sin, "and *therefore* they are required." I leave it to the reader whether these consequences are not fairly deduced from Mr. M.'s principles and way of reasoning on this head.

V. Mr. M. forms another argument thus: It is a sin to disobey and counteract the dictates of natural conscience; to be without natural gratitude to God and our benefactors among men, from a principle of self-love; and to be without natural affection, such as the affection of parents to children, etc. All these appear from Scripture and reason to be sinful, and even a high degree of wickedness. It hence follows, that, acting agreeably to the dictates of conscience, the exercise of gratitude merely from a principle of self-love, and natural affection between parents and children, which are found with the unregenerate, as well as others, are duties, and required by God; for if they are not required, "the absence of them would

be no sin; because, "where there is no law, there is no transgression."

I have not stated Mr. M.'s arguments exactly in his words, as this would take up too much room; but suppose it is here set in as strong and advantageous a light as it stands in his book. The reader, who has access to that, may satisfy himself. And he will be ready to judge whether there is any weight in this argument, when he has attended to the following particulars:—

1. Acting contrary to the dictates of conscience is, in all cases, a sin; because this is acting contrary to love to God. It does not follow as a consequence that acting agreeably to the dictates of conscience is virtue or duty, but only that love to God is so. In this case, the sin of acting contrary to the dictates of conscience does not stand in opposition to acting according to the dictates of it; but to obedience to God's law, which requires love to him. Both of the former may be sin. It is always contrary to God's law, and is sin, to disregard the dictates of conscience, and that may be and often is a sin, and directly contrary to God's law, which is agreeably to the dictates of conscience. These are, in this respect, not in opposition to each other, but both are in opposition to the divine law. The Pharisee, who went up to the temple to pray, had lived in obedience to his conscience, and acted up to the dictates of it, and did so in the address he made to God; yet, I suppose none will say he was doing his duty, and obeying God's commands; or that God required him to do as he did, when he stood praying. To be sure, Mr. M. will not; for he represents him as guilty of high-handed wickedness in making this prayer, and even one of the vilest sinners on earth. In obeying his conscience he disobeyed God, instead of obeying him, or being friendly to him in the least degree. Acting against the dictates of conscience is sinful, because this is in all cases acting against God. Therefore, acting agreeably to the dictates of conscience is sin, when persons doing thus act against God; which is the case always when they are enemies to him, as are all the unregenerate.

2. It does not appear that want of gratitude to benefactors, from a principle of self-love only, is any where spoken against or condemned in the Bible. Christ represents the worst of men as acting from such a principle. (Matt. v. 46, 47.) When St. Paul says of the Gentiles, "neither were they thankful," it does not appear that he speaks of thankfulness from natural principles, as Mr. M. expresses it, or a principle of self-love; but of that thankfulness which God's law requires, and consists in true love to God. It is altogether without foundation,

or the least evidence, that Mr. M. supposes that when St. Paul speaks of the Gentiles not glorifying God as God, and not being thankful, he means glorifying God, and rendering gratitude to him upon natural principles, or from self-love. They were bound by the highest obligations to glorify God, and express their gratitude to him from the highest and best principles, even true love to him, and had no excuse for not doing it; and it would be perfectly unaccountable if St. Paul quite overlooked this, the greatest of all their crimes, when he was setting forth the greatness of their wickedness, and speaks only of that which was immensely less criminal, and is really no crime, any further than it is contrary to true love to God. I can account for Mr. M.'s running into this notion no other way but by concluding he supposed that the Gentiles and all men unregenerate are not obliged to act from any higher principles than those he calls *natural;* a notion which he seems to carry with him through his book, though he sometimes contradicts it.

What is called *natural affection* cannot be suppressed and rooted out but by the prevalence of a high degree of sinfulness; therefore, to be without natural affection is an argument and evidence of the prevalence of a great degree of wickedness. It was, therefore, to the apostle's purpose to mention this, in order to show the bad character of the persons he was describing. This is consistent with there being no command requiring the mere exercise of natural affection, or prohibition forbidding the want of it. The strong and confirmed exercise of pride and sensuality (to use President Edwards's words, quoted by Mr. M.) "tend to overbear and greatly diminish the exercises of those useful and necessary principles of nature." And nothing else will do it. Therefore, where natural affection is overborne and diminished, it is a certain evidence of a very bad, vile character. To be without natural affection, and to be monstrously wicked, is the same thing. Yet natural affection is not a virtue, nor is it in any sense required as a duty. They who exercise it in the highest degree are herein no more obedient and do no more duty than the brutes, in whom it takes place as well as in men. As Mr. M. observes, to be without natural affection is "falling below even the brutal nature, that is wont to retain that instinct of fondness to their young."

4. By being without natural affection, is intended something more than what is merely negative, or not being influenced by this principle. It intends that exercise and conduct which is directly contrary to it, which shows that it is overborne and suppressed. Thus the heathen, in many instances, were with-

out natural affection, i. e., acted directly contrary to it when they burnt their children to death as a sacrifice to their gods. The son is said to be without natural affection when he puts an end to his aged father's life that he may inherit his estate. The father is said to be without natural affection when he acts a cruel part to his child, and sells it into the hands of barbarous men, to get money to enable him to pursue his intemperance and lewdness. In this case, that wickedness which leads a man to counteract natural affection and suppress it is censured and condemned; and not merely the absence of natural affection; therefore, it does by no means follow from such an expression that the exercise of natural affection is required, and is a duty.

VI. Another argument which Mr. M. offers in favor of commands to the unregenerate duties is, that if there are no such commands, and they have no duty to do while impenitent enemies to God, then nothing is required of them; they are left without any law or restraint to indulge their lusts as they please, without any motive or encouragement to the contrary, and to attend on the means of grace. This leaves sinners at liberty, and they have nothing to do. He says, that, upon the principle he is opposing, "the unregenerate, while such, are not required to pray at all, and, by parity of reason, not required to attend any other duty, since they can no more perform them in a gracious manner than they can prayer; and, therefore, according to this principle, are in no sense required to perform them."

And again, he says, "It takes off all restraint from the unregenerate, and opens a floodgate to all manner of iniquity."

I would observe here, that when he says the unregenerate, while such, are not required to pray at all, and are in no sense required to perform any duty, he cannot mean that they are not required to pray as impenitents, and do unregenerate duties; for this would be to say nothing at all. The principle he is opposing is, that nothing is required of men as duty which they do while unregenerate; and if this is all he means to assert in these words, they are no more than to say, "If unregenerate duties are not required, then unregenerate duties are not required;" which is to say nothing. What he here says, he infers as a consequence from the principle, that no unregenerate duties are required, as an argument against it. But the principle itself is no consequence from itself, or argument against it; for this is only to say, if the principle is true, it is indeed true. Just as if I should undertake to prove I am not now writing against Mr. M. in opposition to some one who had said I was, by saying, this cannot be true; for from

this principle it will follow, that I am writing against Mr. M. Besides, Mr. M. here says, that according to this principle they are in no sense required to do any duty; which denies that they are under any command to do any duty, if not required to do unregenerate duty.

Mr. M. says things to the same purpose in many other places of his book. I will mention but one, which is in the following words: "And if this perversion, which is here given of this text, strive to enter, etc., should be received for truth, I cannot but think it would have a very bad tendency to increase security and negligence about religion, and open profaneness among the unregenerate. If this text does not respect the unconverted, and enjoin duties upon them, where can there be any passage found in the Bible that has any reference to them? Let this author produce some divine law requiring the duties, endeavors, and exercises of the unregenerate, or say plainly there is nothing required of them in this state." Here we see he supposes that if any text does not require unregenerate duties, and enjoin something to be done by man while impenitent, it has no respect to the unconverted, nor enjoins any duty upon them; and that there is no medium with him between their being required to do unregenerate duties, and nothing being required of them; and that in this view to deny that unregenerate duties are required, "has a very bad tendency to increase security and negligence about religion, and open profaneness among the unregenerate." Here I would observe,—

1. It is not true that if nothing is required of the unregenerate, which they will do while in that state, then nothing is required of them in any sense. It has been before observed, that they are as much under law as the regenerate, and required to practise godliness and humanity in the exercise of love to God and their neighbor. They cannot be excused from this, and must be wholly to blame for every instance and each degree of failure, and every thing in them that opposes it; unless a person's having no inclination to that which is most reasonable, and a strong, fixed opposition of heart to it, removes all obligation, and takes off all blame in neglecting and opposing it. And if so, then there is no such thing as blame in the universe; nor any such thing as law and moral government. For, according to this, no person can be obliged to do any thing which he is not inclined to do. Therefore, he can be under no law but his own inclination and will, nor in the least to blame while he follows this, which every one always does.

Mr. M. does repeatedly assert that the unregenerate are required to be holy, and to do duty in a right and holy manner.

But he seems, in these passages mentioned, and others, to forget all this, and take it for granted, that the contrary is true, else he never could have expressed himself as he has. And I appeal to the judicious reader to judge, whether his whole book does not owe its existence to his latent maxim in favor of the unregenerate, viz., that they cannot be required to do any thing which they may not do in a state of unregeneracy, so are to blame only for the neglect of such duties, and for walking in those ways that are contrary to them; this being the maxim he builds all upon, though he has sometimes asserted the contrary.

2. This being the case, every thing being required of the unregenerate that is in itself desirable, good, and excellent, and urged with promises of the greatest good, even of eternal life, if they hearken and comply with the least degree of sincerity, and with the most awful threatenings of eternal destruction if they obstinately persist in impenitence and rebellion, nothing can be more suited to awaken and alarm them, to deter them from sin, and excite them to duty. Never did a person believe and realize this, and yet continue in open profaneness or security. And if these truths are kept out of view, nothing remains by which the sinner can be convinced of his true state, and thoroughly awakened. How then could Mr. M. imagine that to preach this to the unregenerate, with all that is implied in it, and nothing else, "would have a bad tendency to increase security and negligence in religion, and open profaneness among the unregenerate"? It is most certain that if this is left out out of view, and nothing but unregenerate duties are preached up, not one sinner will be awakened and convinced. And if they are preached up, as they often are, and as Mr. M. does, (at least in his book,) as being that in which the duty of the unregenerate principally, if not wholly, consists, and that their sin chiefly lies in the neglect of them, they being not much, if at all, to blame for not loving God, and not embracing the gospel, it has the greatest tendency to keep sinners in ignorance, security, and ease; and if it does not make them negligent of all religion, it tends to lead them to neglect and oppose all true religion.

Mr. M., and they who join with him, are wiser than John the Baptist; and if he was wise and right in his way of preaching, they are not so. He said not a word of unregenerate duties, but preached and inculcated nothing short of repentance, true repentance, — that repentance with which the remission of sin was connected, (Luke iii. 3,) — that repentance which implied a preparedness of heart to receive and believe on Christ, when he should be revealed. (Acts xix. 4.) He

required of all his hearers good fruit, fruits meet for repentance, on pain of eternal damnation, (Luke iii. 8, 9, 17,) and said not a word to them of any doings short of this, even repentance and faith on him who should come after him. Indeed, when he was asked by persons what they should do in order to conduct as penitents, — what fruits they ought to bring forth, which were meet for repentance, and a proper manifestation of it, — he told them what external conduct they must go into, in order to this. (Luke iii. 10–14.) But this was not directing them to impenitent, unregenerate doings, but pointing out the exercise and fruits of that repentance which he required.

And had this preaching any tendency to security and open profaneness? Did this "take off all restraint from the unregenerate, and open a floodgate to all manner of iniquity"? No; quite the reverse. By such preaching, a secure, wicked generation was awakened and externally reformed, and many of the children of Israel he turned to the Lord their God. (Luke i. 16.)

If Mr. M.'s servant should desert his service and run from him, and he should send a messenger after him to persuade him to return, with offers of pardon upon his submission, and threatenings of death if he refused; if, when the person he sent should overtake him, and the servant should refuse to return one step back, and draw his sword upon him to oppose him, he should, instead of persisting in requiring him to return, direct and persuade him to do something agreeable to his inclination, and consistent with his hating his master and obstinately refusing to return; would Mr. M. think he was faithful to his trust, or that this had more of a tendency to awaken the servant to a sense of the evil case he was in, or promote his return? Would it not be the most proper and likeliest way to rouse the attention of the servant, and prevent his going off yet farther, to keep up the master's demand, and show the unreasonableness and crime of refusing to comply, the happy consequences of his returning, and the dreadful evil that a refusal would bring upon him, etc.? Certainly the servant would have no heart to make himself merry in his supposed liberty, or be disposed to go out of the hearing of these things, so long as he had any realizing belief of them and thought there was any hope in his case while he attended, however unwilling he should be to obey his master's orders and return.

3. If the sinner did his duty while he continued a perfectly impenitent enemy to God and the Savior in attending on means, etc., and he is told that God commands him to do

these things with such a heart as he has, seeing he is unwilling to repent and return to God, and obstinately opposes it, and he should be urged to do them from this consideration, it would not have the least influence upon him, or be any motive to him to comply. The sinner has no regard to duty, as such, and is not inclined to do any thing merely because it is duty; this will never be a motive with him to take one step, or to exert himself so much as to lift up a finger. So far as he is influenced by this consideration, he is not an impenitent, but has true respect and love to God, and is disposed to return to him and embrace the gospel. He is, by the supposition, only seeking his own interest, and cares nothing about God or duty to him, in themselves considered, and for their own sake; if he does, the point is gained, and it will be enough to tell him it is his duty to repent and believe on Christ, and there will be no need to devise a lower set of duties for him which he may do merely from a principle of self-love, and as an enemy to God, could there be any such duty; for this is at bottom to urge him to do duty, not because it is his duty, and without any regard to it as such. There is, therefore, a plain contradiction and absurdity in the very proposal. The person is supposed and known to have no regard to his duty, and to care nothing about it, as such; if he had, it would be enough to tell him it is his indispensable duty to love God and embrace the gospel. But while he has no regard to this, he will be influenced and governed by some other motive in all he does, and not at all by this. Nothing but a principle of self-love can be applied to in this case, which has no regard to duty, as such, but his own interest. If he can be thoroughly and feelingly convinced that it is for his own interest to avoid one thing and do another, this will be a forcible and sufficient motive to induce him to do it. But if not, and it seems to him to be for his own interest to act contrary to duty, he will pay no regard at all to the command, how much soever it is urged upon him; it is quite equal with him whether he does his duty or not. He can no more be influenced or bound by obligation and duty than the man possessed with devils could be restrained and confined with fetters and chains. He will break all these bands; however great and strong they are, he will esteem them as straw and rotten wood.

As the unregenerate are wholly under the influence of self-love, and seek their own interest only, they regard duty only as it does, in their view, tend to their own interest. And in this view they may have a sort of desire to do their duty, as the most likely way to escape evil and obtain the good they want. But however high their regard to duty in this sense rises, they yet

have no regard to it for its own sake, or considered merely as duty; but purely for their own sakes, as they consider their own interest to be connected with it. If, therefore, it is for the highest interest of the unregenerate to avoid all open vice, and diligently attend on the means of grace, it being the only likely way to escape eternal destruction and attain endless happiness, and they can be thoroughly convinced of this, it will be the greatest and only motive that can be set before them to induce them to this, and will certainly and effectually influence them. And the consideration that this is their duty, if it was so, would not add the least grain to the motive. It is a matter of perfect indifference with them whether it is duty or sin, if they may answer their own ends by it, and promote their own interest.

God knew this to be the state of the sinner, and has so contrived and suited things to this in the revelation he has given, without saying a word to them of doing any duty while they continue impenitent, that as soon as their consciences are awakened, and they begin to see in what a state they are, they will forsake the courses of the secure profligate, and attend on the means of grace.

Mr. M. and others have, in their great wisdom, devised another method of treating with sinners, by trying to persuade them to do their duty while perfect enemies to God, as if they had a true regard for their duty, and desire to do it for its own sake; when their unregeneracy and all their sinfulness consist in the want of such regard to duty, and opposition of heart to it. In this they are therefore guilty of the absurdity of supposing sinners have some true respect to God, that is, some true love to him and his law, while they are obstinate and perfect enemies to him, and have never had the least degree of repentance of any of their rebellion. And this way of treating sinners is so far from having any tendency to their good, that it tends to keep them in ignorance and security, and always has this effect where there is nothing to prevent its genuine influence.

Before I end this section, I would observe, the phrase, *conscientious performance of duty*, which Mr. M. uses so often with respect to the unregenerate and the regenerate, when they have no grace, or are not in the exercise of it, is very ambiguous, and tends to give a wrong idea of the case. I think the natural and proper import of the phrase is, a performance of duty in sincerity and out of true respect to the duty as commanded. If he who is only an eye-servant, and has no true respect to his master, but hates him and his service, behaves obediently in his master's presence merely because he is

in his master's hands, and fears his displeasure and the rod, no one perhaps will think this may be properly called a *conscientious performance of duty.* But this is as properly and as much so as the best performances of the unregenerate, or of the regenerate whose grace wholly fails them, if any such there are. If Mr. M. intends any more by this phrase, which I conclude he does, he has only imposed on himself and his reader. Men may act agreeably to their consciences, i. e., not know that what they do is contrary to the command, but think they are doing what is right, as Saul did when he persecuted the church, and yet not come up to the conscientious performance of duty, any more than the servant just mentioned, if they act from the same principles.

SECTION III.

In which several Passages in Mr. M.'s Book are attended to, which have not been particularly considered in the former Sections.

I TOOK some pains to prove in my remarks on Dr. Mayhew's sermons, that the words "I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them," (Ezek. xxxvi. 37,) do not mean the prayers of the unregenerate for a new heart; and Mr. M. has taken as much or more pains to prove the contrary, in a long marginal note. I shall not trouble myself or the reader so much as to take notice of all he says on this argument. It may suffice to say, that he has not attempted to answer what I have said to establish my sense, unless it be grossly to misrepresent it; which he ought in all reason to have done, since he undertook to oppose me. I shall, therefore, conclude I have a right to think my sense of the text, and arguments to support it, stand good, notwithstanding all he has said, till Mr. M. or some one else shall show wherein their weakness lies. The misrepresentation I speak of is this — he represents my sense of the text in the following words: "I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, i. e., by the godly few, to to do it for them, i. e., to bestow on these godly few a new heart. Or the construction must run thus: to do it for them, i. e., not for them, but for others that were unregenerate." Whereas, I gave no such sense of the text, or any thing like it. I undertook to prove, by many parallel places, that the thing which God would be inquired of to do it for them was deliverance from their captivity, and resettlement in their own land in peace and prosperity; and said not a word of a new heart,

as the thing to be asked for. Nor do I say that, by the house of Israel, are meant "the godly few." It may mean the godly many, notwithstanding any thing I say. Mr. M. supposes that "a great number of Israelites were brought to true repentance, and the body of that people were reformed." He, indeed, seems to suppose this took place after their return to their own land. The truth of the case is, this took place in a degree, and, in many instances, before any of them returned; and after great numbers had returned, they were in their own land in a state of great affliction and distress for many years, in which time they humbled themselves before God, and earnestly sought deliverance, and confessed and put away the sins that had been found among them, and entered into solemn covenant to renounce all ways of sin and cleave to God and serve him. They appeared to have a new heart, humble, penitent, obedient heart, while they confessed their sins and earnestly inquired and sought of God the deliverance they wanted. There were probably many, even great numbers, of true penitents; these, with the rest of the people who were reformed and in profession true penitents, were the house of Israel, who inquired of God, and earnestly and solemnly besought him (the godly with true sincerity, and the rest only in appearance) to return their captivity, deliver them from their distresses, etc. This leads me to observe another gross mistake Mr. M. has made here. He says, I deny that by the house of Israel, in the text, are meant the same people who under this phrase are spoken of in the preceding context. For this assertion he had not the least reason, as I am sure it is not true, as any one may be who will read what I have wrote on that argument.

Before I leave this long note I shall remark upon a number of other passages in it, not pretending, however, to mention every one that appears to me very exceptionable.

He supposes the prayers and seeking of the unregenerate are spoken of in the following words: "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus, Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke. Turn thou me, and I shall be turned." (Jer. xxxi. 18.) He says, "It is evident that while unconverted he thus bemoans himself, confessing the justice of God's chastisement, his own stubbornness and unteachableness, and under conviction of the necessity of this change of his own impotency, and the insufficiency of all means, he cries to God to work it in him."

1. I observe Mr. M. here represents the unregenerate sinner as being converted already; he is become submissive, pliable, and teachable, so as truly to bemoan his own past stubborn-

ness and unteachableness, and acknowledge the justice of God in his eternal damnation; and being quite reconciled to turning to God, and having a very good will in the matter, he cries to God to do that for him which he cannot do himself, however well disposed he is towards it. This is the light in which many set the unregenerate who are awakened to a concern about their eternal interest, and in which multitudes view themselves and imagine they are doing their utmost, and crying to God to do that for them which they are quite willing and would be glad with all their hearts to do, but it is utterly beyond their power. It is impossible that the sinner who has this notion of himself should feel himself wholly to blame for not turning to God, and be sensible that not embracing the gospel is the greatest of all sins, or that he deserves to be damned for it.

The unregenerate sinner is so far from being of this character that he is properly represented by the foregoing words: "Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke." The unregenerate sinner is always like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, who will not submit to the hand of his master, but is perfectly untoward and opposite, and only attempts to get out of his hands. But as soon as he comes to a better mind, and has a new heart, he condemns and bemoans himself, and sensible of his perverseness, and the opposition of his own heart to God, he heartily cries, "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned." This is the prayer of a regenerate sinner submitting to God, after a course of obstinate rebellion, and feeling his own perverseness and dependence on God for all moral good, as no unregenerate sinner ever did.

If it should be said the regenerate are turned already, why should they pray to God to turn them? I answer, they are turned in a low and imperfect degree, and now see unspeakably more of the perverseness and obstinacy of their hearts than ever an unregenerate person did. They need the continuance of the influence which has changed their hearts in some degree, and to be turned more and more. Thus David prays, long after he was a good man, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." (Ps. li. 10.) The Christian needs to be turned as really as any other man, and sees his need of it more, and heartily desires it. Why, then, should he not pray for it? Would Mr. M., or any other man, think it improper and strange if he should hear a number of professed Christians use this expression in prayer, "Turn us, and we shall be turned"? Has he not used it, or expressions of the same import, times without number?

Mr. M. says, "He is represented as converted while he stands praying for it, as is incontestably clear from the following words: 'For thou art the Lord my God; surely after that I was turned I repented; and after I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh.'" The whole that Ephraim is represented as saying here appears to be one continued address to God, which may be distinctly read over in less than half a minute. It is but two sentences; the petition, "turn thou me" is urged by this argument, "for thou art the Lord my God." Surely, this is not the language of the unregenerate. He then proceeds to speak of the change that had passed upon him since he was as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, and was the ground of his coming to God with this humble petition as he now does, and is a representation of the temper of mind with which he now addressed God. He, crying to God with this temper of mind, as a friend to his character, and a penitent, returning sinner, is accepted and obtains favor; God immediately says, "I will surely have mercy upon him." Mr. M., in order to make it incontestably clear that he was converted while he stood praying, takes part of the first sentence, which is the reason and argument with which the petition is urged, "for thou art the Lord my God," and adds it to the next sentence, because it would not do to put these words into the mouth of an unregenerate sinner; by which he has broken and spoiled the sense of the whole. If he "is represented as converted while he stands praying for it," he was converted in the middle of a sentence. He said, "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned," and then stopped, because he could go no further while unconverted; and when he got converted, he finishes the sentence he had begun, and urges the petition he had made in an unconverted state, by an argument he could not use while unconverted; which petition was granted before he mentioned the argument. He therefore used the argument when there was no need of it, or of so much as making the petition, for he had already got what he asked for. If he could not make this petition after he was converted, how could he after this back it up, and plead to have it granted, even immediately upon its being granted? I was going to say what I think is incontestably clear; but I forbear, and leave it to the reader.

I would make a brief remark upon what he says on the prodigal. He supposes his coming to himself, and consequently seeing that there was bread enough and to spare in his father's house, and resolving to go and confess his sins to his father, and ask admission into his house; and his actually doing this is designed to represent the unregenerate under convictions. His words are, "He now began to be in want, felt

himself in a famishing condition for want of bread: this put him in earnest upon thinking what he had done; and as all hope of relief that now remained was from his father, he earnestly looked out for help in this way, and found relief. All this is a lively representation of the sinner's being brought to a feeling sense of his perishing want of the bread of life, and that God only has it in his power to bestow, and, therefore, will grant earnestness to look to God for it, as one that seeks bread when life is at stake."

Here he makes the unregenerate sinner, who is under the dominion of his lusts, an enemy to God and the Savior, and so blind that the gospel is hid from him, — he makes such a one, I say, to have his eyes opened to see the wonderful fulness there is in Christ for sinners, and to desire and long for a share in it, as a hungry man longs for bread; to look to God, and actually go to him for it; loathing himself for his sins, and earnestly longing to be God's servant, and dwell in his family. In short, he makes the unregenerate sinner come up to every thing which is necessary in order to his finding mercy, according to Christ's representation of the matter by the prodigal, and all that to which the promises of God's favor are every where made in the gospel. And Mr. M. may be challenged to tell what more ever takes place in a sinner, in order to his finding mercy, than he here says the unregenerate come to. We therefore here see again what little reason Mr. M. had to thank me for proving that there are no promises to the doings of the unregenerate; and that all I said to prove this is as inconsistent with his notion of the character and doings of such as it is with Dr. Mayhew's, and as is any thing contained in my section on means. No such thing can be proved consistently with what he says here, and in many other places; but the contrary is the undeniable consequence.

The prodigal in all he did after he began to be in want, till he came to himself, represents an unregenerate sinner under awakenings and convictions of conscience. In this state he took methods to help himself, which were vain and wholly failed him, but had not the least inclination of returning to his father's house. This blinded him to the fulness of it, and the desirableness of dwelling there. This is a short but true and striking representation of the state of the unregenerate, whatever awakenings and convictions they are under. They begin to be in want; they feel themselves in a miserable, perishing state; and this is the sole ground of all their uneasiness and exercises. They arise and exert themselves, but spend their money for that which is not bread, and their labor for that which satisfieth not. (Isa. lv. 2.) They see not their

true sinfulness and unworthiness, so do not confess. They have not the least inclination to return home to God, however pinched they may be on every side with a sense of their own want. But as soon as they have a new heart their eyes are opened, and they come to themselves; they see what fools they have been, what guilty wretches they are, what full and rich provision is made for the most wretched and vile in Christ the Mediator, and, in these views, return home to God, and, as humble penitents, fly for refuge to sovereign mercy.

It is plain, therefore, that our Savior intended to represent the regenerate sinner by the prodigal, when he came to himself, etc. And we have reason to admire the precision and clearness of the representation he here makes. None but a teacher sent from God could have spoken these words. But they never were understood, nor can be, by those who differ from this divine Teacher in their notions of the character of the unregenerate as much as Mr. M. appears to do. And by the way, if Mr. M. had no better notion of the unregenerate, convinced sinner than is given in this parable by the prodigal before he came to himself, he would never have thought of his growing so much better or less sinful, nor been so much offended at his being set in so bad a light in my section on means. But Mr. M. has made more sad work yet, I think, in what he says on the parable of the Pharisee and publican. (Luke xviii. 9–14.) He says our Savior, in the publican, meant to give the character of an awakened, convinced, unconverted sinner, in distinction from a proud, stupid, self-righteous sinner, and takes considerable pains to prove it.

Our divine Teacher, in this short parable, exhibits two different and opposite characters, in which the exercises and character of the true Christian are in a very clear and striking manner expressed, in opposition to all other religious exercises and characters on earth. In the publican we have the character which is represented, through the Old Testament, as the distinguishing character of the godly, to whom promises of the divine favor are constantly made. Confession of sin is represented as peculiar to those who find mercy. (Pr. xxviii. 13. Ps. xxxii. 5.) The true servants of God, who share in his mercy, and are the objects of his peculiar favor, are the humble, those of a broken heart and contrite spirit. (Ps. xxxiv. 18; li. 17. Isa. lvii. 15.) And promises are constantly made to them who hope and trust in God's mercy, and make that their only refuge; and this is represented as the character of God's people. (Ps. xxxiii. 18; lii. 8; cxlvii. 11.) All this is expressed in the publican's prayer — "God be merciful to me, a sinner." It is not possible for a man to say these words, considered in

their proper sense and latitude, understandingly and heartily, unless he is a true penitent, and in a true sense of what sin is, and what it deserves, with a humble, broken, contrite heart, flies to the sovereign mercy of God, as revealed and offered to sinners in divine revelation, and makes this his only hope and refuge. And in this are summarily comprehended all the exercises of true Christian piety. What is expressed in these words, "God be merciful to me a sinner," is the very soul and spirit of the fifty-first Psalm, in which not an unregenerate sinner, but David, an eminent saint, expresses the humble, penitent, pious sentiments of his heart. This Psalm is, as it were, epitomized with so much judgment and precision, and the very spirit of true piety, as revealed through the whole of the Old Testament, is so comprehensively summed up in this short sentence, which Christ puts into the mouth of the publican, that it is one standing evidence, among ten thousand others, that he was a divine teacher. No man, unless divinely inspired, would ever have thought of thus distinguishing all true piety from that which is not so.

But so great is the blindness of men, such are their prejudices, that when this is done to their hand by Him who spake as never man spake, they overlook all the instruction that is given, and cannot see any part of the character of the godly, or the least expression of true piety, in the words, but think they rather express the heart of a friend to sin, an enemy to God, and an obstinate opposer of his wonderful mercy offered to sinners in Jesus Christ. Who would expect to find Mr. M. among these, who has had so long a time, and been under so many advantages, to find out what is the spirit of true Christian piety, and what are the exercises of the saint in his approaches to God?

But let us attend to the reasons he gives against the meaning and design of this parable, which I have endeavored briefly to establish, and in favor of his own.

1. He says, "There does not appear any thing in the publican's prayer conclusive of his being a saint, no distinguishing character of a saint." I am sorry this did not appear to him, since I am sure nothing but prejudice or some worse cause could prevent it. But enough of this before.

2. He queries what instruction is here given worthy of a divine teacher, if the parable is understood in the sense he opposes? "Is it that the prayer of a saint, put up in faith, is more acceptable to God than the prayer of one of the vilest sinners upon earth?" *

* Why was the Pharisee one of the greatest sinners on earth? He was a reformed sinner, and did many duties from a principle of self-love and natural

ANSWER. The instruction given is very great, and most important and interesting. It does not teach us, indeed, what prayer is most acceptable and pleasing to God for its own sake, or considered in itself; for in this respect all sinners are perfectly on a level, and the holiest prayer is no more acceptable than any other. The holiest saint that ever was is no more acceptable to God in his person or offerings than the vilest sinner on earth, considered in any other view than as united to Christ, and trusting in his merit and righteousness alone to recommend his person and offerings; for both are, in any other view, under the curse of God, and proper objects of the divine displeasure and abhorrence. But our divine Teacher here tells us, in a very plain, familiar, striking way and manner, what is that character, and what are those exercises in which the sinner comes to God, so as to find acceptance and obtain mercy through a Mediator, as distinguished from every character, and all the exercises which fail of this. Or with what temper and exercises the true Christian draws near to God, and lives by faith in Christ from first to last; and in what true Christian humility and piety consist, as it is distinguished from every thing else, and points out the only way to heaven, in distinction from all by-paths. This I endeavored briefly to illustrate just now. Woe to him who has not yet this instruction, either from this or some other passage of Scripture.

3. He asks, "Is this the whole truth? Does it agree with the Scripture account in general of the difference between a saint and a sinner?" What has been said before is an answer to this; and it is not a little surprising that such a question could be asked. But the next words are more shocking still. "Is it not the character of a saint to lift up his eyes with his heart to God in prayer; to draw near with full assurance of faith, and come boldly to a throne of grace? All which are directly the reverse to the character here given to the poor, dejected publican."

ANSWER. The publican had a great degree of the assurance

conscience. He had tenderness of conscience, and was very exact and careful to avoid all known sin, and do all known duty. Why did not God take a favorable notice of him, and express his approbation? Mr. M. will say, perhaps, he trusted in his own righteousness to recommend him to God.

ANS. 1. Why should he not do this? How can this be so great a sin, since this was, according to Mr. M., worthy of God's favorable notice?

ANS. 2. The awakened, convinced sinner has as much of this same spirit and disposition as the Pharisee had. It is true, his conscience is convinced that his own righteousness will not avail for his acceptance; but this is not in his favor, but rather against him, as he continues of this disposition of heart, and indulges it, under all the light and conviction he has, and is actually attempting to recommend himself by his own righteousness and doings; this being as agreeable to his heart as it was to the Pharisee; and his heart opposes the way of acceptance by a Mediator, at least as much as the Pharisee did.

of faith, which consisted in trusting in the mercy of God, while his great sinfulness was in full view. There is no true assurance of faith but this; and he was bold indeed to come to God for mercy and make this his only refuge, bringing nothing in himself but sin, and a clear and affecting view of his amazing infinite guilt and vileness. This is all the true Christian boldness that ever any one had or exercised in coming to the throne of grace. There is no other boldness but that of the Pharisee, set in direct opposition to this of the publican. He who does not like and exercise the boldness at the throne of grace which is described in the character of the publican, but exercises another sort of boldness before God, has certainly nothing but a pharisaical boldness, whatever name he may call it by. I see not why Mr. M. should not like the Pharisee as a saint, had he not been called by so bad a name, and expressly condemned by our Savior. I am confident he had that very boldness which Mr. M. means by Christian boldness, so far as his idea of it differs from that which appears in the publican; and I know not why Mr. M. cannot well say and do just as the Pharisee did, only call it humble boldness instead of proud boasting. The publican is said not so much as to lift up his eyes to heaven, not to denote dejection, but humility and faith, in opposition to the pride and boldness of the Pharisee; even that Christian humility, without which there is no true confidence and boldness at the throne of grace.

It is to be hoped that Mr. M. daily makes this prayer and comes to the throne of grace with that very faith and boldness which is recommended in the character of the publican, and that he has been advancing in this for many years, however unaccountably he has overlooked it on this occasion, and wrote in such a manner that I know not how the humble Christian can read it and enter into the true spirit of it, without being surprised and shocked in a manner that is not easily expressed.

4. He says, though "this man went down to his house justified," i. e., actually accepted and pardoned, it does not follow that he was so when he prayed; but he might be converted soon after, even before he got down to his house. This is, therefore, no evidence that he did not make an unconverted prayer; and is so far from being against his sense of the parable, that it strongly supports it, and shows the efficacy and success of the prayers of the unconverted, so is an instance more to his purpose.

Answer. Christ here exhibits a character in the publican, and these words are predicated of this character and nothing else, and are the most express assertion, that they who have

this character are accepted and justified; and they who, because they like not this character, will imagine and form another quite different one, about which Christ says not one word, and apply these words to that, are very presumptuous, and set their own wisdom up above that of a divine Teacher. They who take this liberty will make wild steerage indeed.

The words immediately following, which Mr. M. has entirely neglected, are worthy of particular notice. "For every one that exalteth himself shall be abased, and every one that humbleth himself shall be exalted." These words fix the sense of the parable, if nothing else did. The Pharisee exalted himself; the publican humbled himself, therefore was justified and exalted. Here Christ does in the most express manner declare that all who are of the character exhibited in the publican, and do as he did, do humble themselves, and shall be exalted. Here, then, Mr. M. has again found an absolute promise of salvation to his humble, unregenerate sinner; and must, according to his interpretation, hold to such promises. We might from this, and other instances of the like kind, safely conclude he had renounced the book he formerly wrote to prove the contrary, had he not mentioned it in his preface to this with approbation, and thanked me for espousing the same cause, and finishing the debate. But as the case now stands, it is a glaring instance, among many others, of the most gross inconsistency with himself.

Mr. M., through his whole book, and in the passage I am now upon, frequently speaks of his awakened sinner as the humble sinner, and often as legally humbled. This is not a Scripture expression, and it is difficult to know what he means by it, unless it be true humility, or else something directly contrary to it. The Scripture every where speaks of the humble person as one who, by his humility, is distinguished from the ungodly, and as one who is interested in God's favor, as our Savior does in the words under consideration.*

I pass to another passage in this remarkable note. Mr. M. undertakes to represent the state of an unregenerate sinner, with respect to his desires of the salvation offered in the gospel, by a person who has a mortification, so that it is necessary the limb should be cut off in order to save his life. In this case, from his love and desire of life, he on the whole

* Ahab and Rehoboam and the princes of Israel are said to humble themselves. (2 Chron. xii. 6–7.) But this has reference only to their external conduct; the appearance and profession of true humility which they put on, and not to any thing in their hearts. If they had really and heartily humbled themselves, they would have been exalted and saved forever; but as they did this only externally, God gave them an answerable external deliverance, and that only.

earnestly desires, and cheerfully submits to the operation. This, Mr. M. says, is "a plain simile." I answer, it is not so, nor at all to the purpose, unless the unregenerate do on the whole desire the salvation which the gospel offers — yea, desire it as a man in danger of death desires life, and do cheerfully submit to the terms of salvation, and actually choose and embrace Christ and his righteousness as offered in the gospel, in order to escape damnation.

Mr. Mills's notion of faith is, I think, worthy of special remark. He does not undertake to describe faith, and particularly show what it is, but he repeatedly suggests what may lead us to his notion of it. He, speaking of persons insisting that the unregenerate are required to pray in faith, adds, "A thing as impossible in nature as for the same thing to be and not to be at the same time; not only because faith implies regeneration, but also because there is no promise for the unregenerate to ground their faith upon, as the author has abundantly proved." And again, speaking of the same thing, he says, "Besides, what have the unregenerate, while such, to ground an act of faith in prayer upon, since, as the author hath well proved, they have no title to any of the promises?"

What is faith, then, according to him? Why, plainly this, a person's really believing that God has promised life and salvation to him, or that he has an interest in the divine promises; for if faith was any thing else but this, a person might believe before he has any promise made to him, or is interested in any promise; which Mr. M. here says he cannot, and that it is as impossible as for the same thing to be and not to be at the same time.

It follows from this that sinners must be interested in the promises before it is possible for them to believe or do any thing in faith. For if there is no promise made to any thing lower than faith, and short of that, so that the sinner may be interested in the promise before he believes, he never can believe, because in order to his exercising faith he must be entitled to the promise. But Mr. M. agrees, and has earnestly contended, that there is no such promise. Therefore, according to him it is absolutely impossible, as impossible as that the same thing should be and not be at the same time; that there ever should be any such thing as faith exercised by any in this world, whether regenerate or unregenerate, for none have a title to any promise before they believe.

It also hence follows that it is not the duty of the unregenerate to believe, and so not their duty to exercise any true holiness; nor are they in the least to blame for the neglect of all this, it being absolutely impossible to them. And if faith

and repentance are not their duty, unbelief and impenitence are no sin. No wonder, then, Mr. M. has espoused the cause of the poor, innocent, unregenerate against me, who had charged them with great guilt and vileness in continuing impenitent unbelievers, and had represented this as the greatest sin of which they could be guilty. This is perfectly wrong and abusive, if his account of faith is right. And no wonder he is zealous to find abundance of unregenerate duties to be done, for, according to him, nothing is their duty; and if they have no unregenerate duty to do, they have nothing to do, and nothing is required of them; it being most unreasonable and absurd to call upon them to repent and believe.

But if faith is a cordial belief of the truth of divine revelation, or seeing them to be what they are with approbation of heart, so that nothing is wanting in order to this but a right taste and temper of mind, or a wise and understanding heart, then this is the duty of all, for the neglect of which none have the least excuse; and all may be most reasonably called upon to believe, and threatened with God's highest displeasure and eternal damnation if they neglect it. But if Mr. M.'s account of faith is right, none of these things are true. Who can attend to this, and many other things which Mr. M. has said agreeable to it, and not think that at bottom he believes the unregenerate are not at all to blame for unbelief, or any thing in which unregeneracy consists, even though he has never expressly asserted it, and has more than once granted the contrary? But I pass to another thing, which is worthy of particular notice.

Mr. Mills, after he has said much to prove that the unregenerate are commanded to do unregenerate duty, at length desires it may be noted to prevent mistakes and objections, "that in what has been or may be said of the unregenerate's being required to pray, etc., he would be understood to mean such of the unregenerate as are visibly related to God in covenant; at least, admitted by baptism, and thereby being trained up under the advantages of the gospel, laid under solemn vows to deny ungodliness, etc. These, all these, whether regenerate or unregenerate, are required to pray and attend on all other religious and Christian duties, as above."

He keeps this in view, and reminds the reader near twenty times, as a matter of great importance to be observed, that he is speaking of "God's covenant people," — his "visible covenant people, visibly related to God in covenant."

It is difficult, I think, to know what he means by this. But let his meaning be what it will, it does not appear to what purpose he makes this observation, or what mistakes and

objections it tends to prevent. Does he mean to exclude all others from any obligations to do duty, and as not being required to do any duty at all? It seems he does; but for what reason? If his arguments prove that there are unregenerate duties required of any, they equally prove they are required of all, whether visibly in covenant or not. Has Mr. M. nothing to say to others? Must not they be required to attend on means, pray, and do other duties? Must they be left to abandon themselves to all wickedness, and have nothing required of them? What does he mean by this distinction? Does he suppose that none are under any obligation to any duty until they of their own accord enter into covenant with God, and solemn engagements and vows to do it? If there are any commands requiring something to be done by the unregenerate while they continue such, being impenitent enemies to God, no reason can be given why all such, whether "visibly related to God in covenant" or not, are not required to do these duties.

But why does he say, "These are required to pray and attend other religious duties"? What he asserts and attempts to prove is, that they are required to do unchristian duties; duties which persons are to do, not with a Christian, but with a perfectly unchristian spirit; not as Christians, but as enemies to Christ. And how can these be called Christian duties?

By those who are "visibly related to God in covenant" he means, I conclude, if the words have any meaning, those who have entered into covenant with God, by professedly giving themselves up to him as his friends and servants, to be obedient to him in all things as his people and servants, and as the disciples of Jesus Christ. None but such are visibly related to God in covenant. None but such put on the profession and appearance of God's people, nor are in appearance (which I suppose is the same with being visibly so) in covenant with God. But such are in appearance and profession, or visibly, not unregenerate, but true Christians. It is expected of these that they will do the duties which Christ requires of his people, and attend on all his institutions and ordinances, and walk agreeably to their profession and vows. So far as they visibly fail of this they come short of the character of those who are "visibly related to God in covenant." It is, therefore, impossible that he who is visibly unregenerate can be of God's visible covenant people, as impossible as it is that one should be a true Christian in appearance and profession who at the same time appears to be an open enemy to Christ. There is, therefore, the greatest absurdity in addressing and teaching those who are "visibly related to God in covenant," as though they were unregenerate, and appeared to be so, or

directing and exhorting them to unregenerate duties. Therefore, if such directions and requirements are made to any, they must be made to the visibly unregenerate, and not to those who are God's visible covenant people, or the visible friends and servants of Christ. Mr. M. is therefore so far from "preventing mistakes and removing objections" in these words, that he has himself made as gross a mistake as he well could, and opened a door to the greatest objections, while he confines unregenerate duties to the visibly regenerate, and at the same time calls them Christian duties, and excludes all the visibly unregenerate, to whom alone exhortations and commands to unregenerate duties can be made, if to any, as not being the proper subjects of such exhortations and commands. The covenant of grace, the Christian covenant, by entering into which men become "visibly related to God in covenant," proposes and requires no duties to be done by them, as visibly unregenerate and enemies to God, but Christian duties, which are incumbent on them as Christians. Their entering into this covenant, therefore, lays them under no obligations to act as the unregenerate, and do duties as such, but the contrary. If they might, before this, while visibly unregenerate, be exhorted and commanded to do unregenerate duties, they cannot now; upon their becoming visible saints, and visibly related to God in covenant, they are to be treated as saints, and not as unregenerate; and the duties of the Christian covenant, which they are to do in the character of Christians, are to be inculcated on them, and no other.

Mr. M., however, appears to be of a different opinion. He thinks the unregenerate may sincerely and heartily enter into covenant with God and do Christian duty with no better a heart than they have, and not pretend, profess, or engage any thing more than an unregenerate person may heartily do consistent with his being unregenerate and appearing to be so. However inconsistent this is in itself, it is in a measure consistent with Mr. M.'s notion of the unregenerate, under awakenings and convictions of conscience. He considers them to be so humble, penitent, and obedient, so well disposed towards their duty, and desirous and inclined to obey and serve God, and do all that they can, and as little or nothing to blame for not embracing the gospel or doing any thing that implies regeneration and saving conversion, that it is no wonder he thinks they may heartily give themselves to God with a desire to serve him and do all their duty, waiting on God in this way to do that for them which they (poor innocent creatures) cannot work in themselves, which they would be glad with all their hearts to do, if it was in their power. All who have

such notions of the unregenerate naturally talk of their covenanting with God and being his visible covenant people, while they are visibly unregenerate, and think the unconverted may sincerely and properly do and be all this, and heartily perform many duties which are required of them, with much more such like jargon.

But they who consider the unregenerate as impenitent and obstinate enemies to God and Jesus Christ, who with all their hearts oppose and reject the gospel, for which they have no excuse, but are as voluntary and as wholly blamable in this as in any external acts of sin, and that these external acts, such as lying and profane swearing, derive all their odiousness and blame from this sinfulness of heart, and as being fruits of it; and that unregeneracy itself, or that in which it consists, is a most odious, blamable, scandalous wickedness, and that no external overt act of sin is properly scandalous in any other view than as an evidence and fruit of the former; — I say, they who view things in this light, and have this notion of the unregenerate, which I have before endeavored to show is the true one, will never talk in the language of Mr. M., which I am considering. They have no notion that covenanting with God, and being God's visible covenant people, is so consistent with the character of the unregenerate that they have any right externally to enter into this covenant. They are sensible that such an appearance and profession and visible covenant relation to God becomes none but the true Christian; and if the unregenerate take on them this appearance and profession, they lie to God and man in a most aggravated and shocking manner; are guilty of mocking God, and of gross hypocrisy; and so do that which is much more vile and provoking in God's sight than no profession, or pretence to that which implies love to duty and to God; and they know the unregenerate do not deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly and righteously in this world, unless it be in appearance and pretence, which is most contrary to the truth, and the worst sort of lying.

I shall conclude this section with observing that Mr. M. has, in the latter part of his book, a great deal to say about "some that are, or have been, public teachers." He charges those with holding several things which I should think did not concern me, were it not that I am somehow blended with them, as if we were one and the same. I know not what right Mr. M. had to do this. I have no connection with them, that I know of, nor do I think I am obliged to answer for what they have said. It is enough if I can answer for myself.

I have heard there have been some religious jars and con-

tentions of late years in the county in which Mr. M. lives, and one or two ministers have been deposed in the tumult. These things he attributes to the "new divinity" which he often mentions, and to "some who are, or have been, public teachers." These, it seems, have raised disputes to the greatest height, divided towns, broke societies and churches, "alienated affection among dear brethren," etc. Mr. M. has himself been very zealous and active in these affairs; and it has been thought by many that he, with some of his brethren who joined with him, have overacted their parts, and have been themselves very much the blamable cause of these divisions and breaches, which might have been prevented or healed, in a great measure at least, had they conducted with that prudence and judgment, that brotherly tenderness and caution, which became them.

But be this as it may, I see not what connection these things have with any thing I have wrote. They took place chiefly before my section on means was published, and "those who are, or have been, public teachers," if I can guess who they are, have been as far from approving that section as Mr. M. himself; and I think his jumbling these things together as he has done has no tendency to give light in the controversy between him and me, but is suited to lead those who have not been particularly acquainted with these matters into a mistake.

SECTION IV.

Mr. Mills's Inconsistencies with himself.

A NUMBER of these have been mentioned and particularly pointed out in the foregoing sections; I shall just mention them here, under the head of inconsistencies, and point out others which have not been considered.

I. He insists that internal light and conviction of conscience does not aggravate the guilt of the sinner; and yet he represents sinning against the light of conscience as the great and chief aggravation of the sinner's guilt, and says, "It is readily granted that he that sins against a greater degree of light is, in that respect, a greater sinner."

II. Though he grants that he who sins against a greater degree of light is, in that respect, a greater sinner, and that sins against the light of conscience are the greatest sins, yet he represents him to be the greatest sinner whose conscience is perfectly blind and stupid.

III. He says the greater sinfulness of the inhabitants of

Bethsaida, by which they were worse than the Tyrians and Sidonians, consisted in their not being brought to legal repentance and external reformation, by the preaching of Christ and his mighty works; and yet he elsewhere says these very persons did repent and reform under the preaching of John the Baptist, Christ and his apostles, and by the mighty works done among them.

IV. He insists upon the necessity of the influences of the Spirit of God, in order to bring men to an awakened, convinced state, or to what he calls legal repentance and humiliation. And yet he supposes the Tyrians and Sidonians would have been actually brought to this without any such influence, and by the bare use of the external means which the Jews enjoyed, and that Christ himself asserts this.

V. He quotes the words of the Westminster and Savoy confessions with approbation, in which it is said, "the works done by the unregenerate cannot please God." And yet he says of Ahab, Jehu, and the Israelites at Mount Sinai, who were unregenerate, that God took a favorable notice of their works, and gave his express approbation of them.

VI. In what he says concerning the scribe, he supposes that a person cannot be said to be near, or not far from the kingdom of God, on account of his right speculative knowledge. In direct contradiction to this, he says elsewhere, "It is evident and certain that every degree of knowledge that is necessary in order to a state of grace and salvation brings them in state one degree nearer to it."

VII. He says I have not so much as once mentioned the sinner's breaking off from his sins, as that whereby he is more in the way of mercy than going on in them. And yet he repeatedly says that in my account of what renders a sinner more likely to be saved, reformation of life, to the highest degree the unregenerate are capable of, a diligent attendance on means, and all there is in a common work of the Spirit of God, are implied.

VIII. He calls my sense of Luke xiii. 24 a *new* sense, and at the same time represents it as the Arminian sense; and it appears to have been his own sense above twenty years ago, if he was then consistent with himself.

IX. He insists upon it that the doctrine that impenitent unbelievers grow more guilty and vile in the use of means under awakenings and convictions has a very bad tendency, and is matter of great discouragement to a painful attendance on means, and encouragement to sinners to abandon themselves to carelessness and vice. Yet he says that their appearing to themselves to grow worse, which is commonly, if not always,

the case with those under genuine convictions, is no matter of discouragement, but the contrary. The latter is in direct contradiction to the former; for, if their looking on themselves as growing worse is no matter of discouragement to them, then their really growing worse cannot be so.

X. Though he insists much upon it, that God requires duties of the unregenerate which they are to do as such, and which are to be done without the exercise of any true holiness or goodness, yet in the midst of all this he turns right against himself, and says, God requires good duties, gospel holiness; and that God does not abate his demands of sinners by reason of their "prevalent indisposition of heart and disinclination of will to do right;" that "God does not make the depraved will of the creature the rule of his duty; but, on the dreadful penalty of damnation, requires him to reach the appointed end. Make you a new heart, and a new spirit; for why will ye die?" That God does not require these duties as they come marred out of their hands. And yet he says, in the same page, God does require them as they come out of their hands, because they are less sinful than the omission of them would be.

XI. Mr. M. is a zealous asserter that there is not one promise in the whole Bible to the doings of the unregenerate; yet, in direct contradiction to this, he represents them as doing that to which express promises are made, and applies such promises to them.

XII. He speaks of denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, etc., as the fruit and exercise of holiness, which the unregenerate never attain to. But, in contradiction to this, he elsewhere represents the unregenerate as doing all this.

XIII. He asserts that many under the gospel are under a natural impossibility of believing, and therefore cannot be required to believe at present. But, directly contrary to this, he elsewhere asserts that all these are required to pray in faith; to make them a new heart, and turn to God and believe, on pain of damnation.

XIV. He represents the unregenerate as not required to do any thing, if they are not required to do unregenerate duties. Yet, contrary to this, he repeatedly says the unregenerate are required to be holy, and to do duty in a right and holy manner, as has been just now observed.

XV. He says, "The utmost attainments of the unregenerate have nothing in them pleasing to God, nothing that can recommend them to his favor." He also says that these very attainments have something in them of which God takes a favorable notice, and which have his express approbation.

XVI. He insists upon it that they who have no light and

conviction of conscience have as much to answer for, and are as guilty in God's sight, as they who have this in the greatest degree. Yet, directly contrary to this, he says, "It is readily granted that he that sins against a greater degree of light is, in that respect, a greater sinner." And that light and conviction of conscience "is a great and precious favor from God, and endearing grounds of thankfulness;" consequently, if abused, renders a person more guilty than if he had it not.

XVII. He represents the awakened, convinced sinner as reforming all known sin, and as coming up to all known duty. But he elsewhere represents such as seeing themselves guilty of more sin than they were sensible of before; the law comes, and sin revives; and says, "The great impurity and sinfulness attending the sinner's best duties, after his utmost efforts, is the very means God is wont to make use of to humble them." How can they see the great sinfulness of their best duties, when they avoid all known sin, and do all known duty?

XVIII. He represents one end of awakenings and convictions to be sinners' being "fully convinced that in them dwells no good thing." But he elsewhere says there is some sort and kind of goodness in these attainments of the unregenerate. How, then, can they be "fully convinced that there is no good thing in them"?

XIX. He says the unregenerate are required to break off from all known sin, and every thing in the way of embracing Christ, even the secret pride of the heart. This is certainly to come out of a state of sin, which, in the preceding page, he says is not required to be done antecedent to faith in Christ, or "otherwise than by the medium of the gospel, in the way of faith."

XX. He represents the streams to be nothing to the fountain; the acting out of sin to be as nothing to the fountain of sin in the heart. This is directly contrary to what he says of the reformed sinner, as being on this account only so much less guilty and vile than others, or than he was before, even so as to become in a great degree innocent. And he insists that such external reformations, or cutting off these streams of external sin, are of so great account as to overbalance the aggravated guilt which such contract by continuing in unbelief and rejection of the gospel under all the greater light they now have.

XXI. Mr. M. blames me much for speaking of any end to be answered by the use of means by the unregenerate which is short of saving grace, or true holiness, and says that God requires them to attend on means to this end. But when he comes to tell what end means answer, and to what end God

commands sinners to attend, he gives a different and contrary account of the matter, and says the end the use of means answers to them is, to convince them of their sinfulness and humble them, etc.; and that "they are not required to God's gracious acceptance, but to other wise and holy purposes, worthy of God, such as the advancement of his declarative glory in the world," etc.

XXII. Mr. M. is guilty of contradiction in representing the Pharisee, who went up to the temple to pray, as one of the vilest sinners on earth, merely because he trusted in himself that he was righteous, and thought himself better than others, while he himself insists upon it that such who refrain from all known sin, and do all known duty, as the Pharisee did, are in fact better than others, and that God takes a favorable notice of them, and has a peculiar respect to them, on this account; and particularly represents the young man who came to Christ to learn what good thing he should do to inherit eternal life, and was to all appearance as self-righteous as the Pharisee, — I say, represents him as of so lovely a character as to attract Christ's respect and affection. I believe Mr. M. will find it difficult to tell wherein the great difference lies in these two characters, by which the former is the vilest sinner on earth, the latter very desirable and amiable.

To these inconsistencies I shall add several, in which Mr. M. has been guilty of contradicting in his "Inquiry" what he has asserted in his former treatise, called "A Vindication of Gospel Truth."

XXIII. In his "Vindication," he, speaking of St. Peter's words to Simon — "Repent, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee," says, "This 'perhaps,' as here used, imports indeed only a suspicion of the truth of the man's repentance, and not any doubt of God's forgiveness, in case his repentance were sincere." But in his "Inquiry" he asserts the contrary, and builds his argument from these words on this assertion.

XXIV. In his "Vindication" he says, "The Scripture nowhere puts mankind upon seeking their everlasting happiness in any other way than that of well doing, truly such in the account of God, i. e., doing his commandments;" that is, as the unregenerate never do, as he explains his meaning in the words which I shall quote directly. This is in direct contradiction to great part of his "Inquiry," in which he asserts, and labors abundantly to prove, that God requires unregenerate doings, by which men are directed to seek their everlasting happiness, and strive to enter in at the strait gate, etc.

XXV. He goes on to say, in his "Vindication," "Certainly

none will pretend that well doing in the account of God, or (which is the same thing) doing his commandments, is what agrees to the unregenerate, under the guilt and dominion of sin." He has contradicted this two ways in his "Inquiry." He has done it by insisting that the unregenerate do God's commandments, and may keep them perfectly and be in this respect perfectly obedient, while they are under the guilt and dominion of sin, even all the commands to unregenerate doings. He also contradicts this by representing Jehu as doing well in God's account, when all that he did is considered and spoken of as the doings of a man unregenerate.

XXVI. In his "Vindication" he denies that men are commanded or directed to ask any thing of God in unbelief, or to pray in any way short of faith; and to support what he asserts, quotes the words of St. James: "But let him ask in faith," etc. But in his "Inquiry" he insists upon it, as a very important doctrine, that men are required to pray in unbelief, or as the unregenerate do; and he zealously asserts that these words of James are not in the least inconsistent with this doctrine, and by no means prove that "prayer short of a gracious manner of performance," and short of faith, "is in no sense required."

XXVII. In his "Vindication" he says, "Since sin is the predominant principle in the unrenewed man, from whence all his actions must take their principal denomination and have their specification, how is it possible for the best doings of such a man, while under the dominion of sin, to harmonize, in any degree, with the moral nature of God, so as to be approvable in his sight?"

This he contradicts in his "Inquiry," two ways. First, by saying that God takes a favorable notice of the doings of the unregenerate, and that they, as such, have had his express approbation. Secondly, by insisting upon it that God commands those doings, which necessarily implies his approving of them, and is indeed the same thing; and by insisting upon it that, though God commands these doings, he does not command that which is sin.

XXVIII. In his "Vindication" he says the doings of the unregenerate are displeasing and offensive to God; and are, "in their whole moral complexion, infinitely disagreeable, and, therefore, displeasing to the divine purity." Most he says about the doings of the unregenerate, in his "Inquiry," is in direct contradiction to this.

XXIX. In his first book, he asserts "there is infinite contrariety between the purity of the divine nature and the polluted doings of the most refined creature under sin's dominion." In

his last book he undertakes to show that it is consistent with the purity of the divine nature to command such doings; or, which is the same, approve of them.

XXX. In his "Inquiry" he speaks of obedience from self-love as required in the Scriptures, and, therefore, a duty; but in his "Vindication" he speaks of selfishness, or self-love, as in direct opposition to that which is right and good. In this view, he says, "Their cries for mercy and their very best devotions are, at bottom, but selfish, carnal, and impure in God's sight. Here, according to him, selfishness, or self-love, is the same with carnal, or the carnal mind, which is itself enmity against God. But in his last book this is a principle of obedience, which men are commanded to exercise.

XXXI. In his "Vindication" he insists upon it, that to represent the doings of the unregenerate, who are under the dominion of sin, as pleasing and acceptable to God, or any way tending to obtain his favor, (while they do not come to Christ, but reject him,) is most contrary to God's character as moral Governor of the world, and to the whole gospel of Christ, and dwells upon this as a matter of great importance; but in his "Inquiry" he has got on the other side of the question, and takes pains to show that the doings of such, even of Ahab, Jehu, and the children of Israel at Mount Sinai, who were under the dominion of sin, and had no regard to a Mediator, had God's express approbation and obtained his favorable notice, so far as, out of respect to these doings, to grant them a great salvation.

The reader will here observe how much more orthodox Mr. M. was in these important points when he wrote his former book than he is now. If he should go on in the way he is now going, and write another book, is it not to be feared that he will give up most of the important doctrines of Calvinism, and appear quite on the other side of the question, towards which he has made such large strides already? I am sure, if he will be in any measure consistent with himself, he must either retract much he has said in his last book, or go fully into the Arminian scheme. It is to be hoped he will readily do the former.

I shall conclude this *inconsistent* section with the words which Mr. M. uses, when he thought he had fastened a contradiction on his former antagonist: "So very difficult a thing is it for any one, in the defence of error, consistently to speak the same things! And when this is the case, it must be equally difficult for the reader to fix upon the true meaning of an author, or, indeed, for his answerer to confute what is said in one page, and not at the same time confirm what is said in another."

SECTION V.

Showing the evil Tendency of Mr. Mills's Inquiry.

It is hoped that what has been said is sufficient to show that what Mr. M. has designed chiefly to oppose in his "Inquiry" are important truths; and, therefore, that what he advances and attempts to support are real and hurtful errors; and the evil tendency of some things he has advanced has been mentioned and pointed out. But I suppose it will be proper and useful more particularly to attend to this matter, and consider what is the natural tendency of this book, all taken together, so far as it is received and has influence.

I. I think it fully appears, from the view we have had of Mr. M.'s book, that it tends greatly to the dishonor of Christ and his gospel. It does so in representing sinners more to blame for other sins than for the sin of unbelief and rejecting Christ and the gospel; yea, as if the sinner is little or nothing to blame for the latter, if he reforms all other known sins. This view of the matter Mr. M.'s book gives: no one will ever learn from this that the sin of rejecting Christ and the gospel at heart, and that with direct acts of opposition and enmity against him, is a greater sin than injuries done to our neighbor; but he will find the contrary through the whole book, implicitly or expressly asserted, and that he has often denied that there is any crime in the former. Thus he has justified the wicked in the greatest sin he is guilty of, and appeared on his side in the great and chief controversy between Jesus Christ and sinners.

Now, what could be more dishonorable to Christ and the gospel than this? and what could set his character and the great salvation in a more unworthy, mean, and contemptible light? It has been observed in what a different light divine revelation sets this matter, not only that men are without excuse and wholly to blame for not heartily embracing Christ and the gospel, but that this is immensely the greatest sin that men can be guilty of, in comparison with which any other sin is not to be mentioned; and it is easy to see in what a grand and honorable light this sets Jesus Christ; and is it not as easy to see that the contrary doctrine, which is Mr. M.'s, equally degrades and dishonors this glorious character?

In this Mr. M. has fallen in with the inclination and humor of a fallen world. Mankind are backward to be convinced of the sin of unbelief, and of not heartily receiving Christ and embracing the gospel; they are inventing a thousand pleas

and excuses in their favor, in opposition to such convictions. They will be convinced of any thing almost rather than this. And when any are convinced in their judgment and conscience that this is altogether their crime, and the greatest that they are guilty of, this truth is, beyond most others, opposite and galling to their hearts. All this is owing to their not having any love to Christ, nor a view and sense of his worthy and glorious character. Mr. M. has joined hands with them in this matter, and all he has said tends to prevent this conviction, to justify and quiet the sinner in the pleas and excuses he is making in his own favor. I therefore think his book may be justly looked upon as an attempt to exalt, flatter, and justify sinners at the expense of the honor of the glorious Redeemer. I own I view the matter in this light, and this has been a supporting and animating consideration to me in the midst of all the opposition made to the doctrine I have advanced on this head, by means of Mr. M.'s book or any other way, and in the pains I have taken to support this doctrine, in opposition to Mr. M.'s objections; for I consider myself as pleading the cause of Christ, and attempting to exalt and honor his character, in opposition to a self-justifying world, and to condemn and abase the sinner, however imperfect and deficient the attempt may be.

II. Mr. M.'s book tends to prevent sinners coming to any proper, true, and thorough conviction of their guilt and vileness, and the state they are in, and the whole drift and spirit of it is in direct opposition to this. This I have taken notice of in the foregoing sections, and it appears from what has been observed in the last particular. The sinner's opposition and enmity of heart against Christ and the gospel is kept wholly out of sight through the whole of Mr. M.'s book, and the most that he says supposes that there is no such thing in the heart of an awakened, convinced sinner, and is in direct opposition to its being the greatest of all sins, if there is any such thing. Therefore, wherever Mr. M.'s book is believed, and has influence, there will be no true, genuine conviction of sin, and so there can be no conversion to God. And he who is brought to genuine, thorough conviction of sin, will renounce and discard Mr. M.'s book, so far as he understands it, as what is most directly contrary to the truth. There is no medium between this and losing his convictions. Mr. M.'s book is, therefore, just as mischievous and hurtful in its tendency as is an attempt to prevent sinners' consciences being thoroughly awakened and convinced, or to remove such conviction wherever it takes place.

III. Mr. M.'s book exactly coincides with the inclination of

the sinner's heart who is in some degree awakened and thoughtful about his eternal interest, and has reformed external sins, and betook himself to external duty, and tends to flatter such to their eternal destruction, and give them that ease and resting-place which must be taken from them, or they will perish forever.

As soon as a sinner's conscience is awakened, he reforms his external conduct, and betakes himself to external duty, with a view to distinguish himself from others by his doings, to grow better, and do something to abate the divine anger and displeasure against him; and if he believes Mr. M.'s book, he will think he has obtained his end, and his conscience will be quieted, and he will rest in a great measure easy and secure; for now he has forsaken all known sin, and does all known duty, and God is less angry with him; yea, takes a favorable notice of him; and, on this account, he is in a likely way to be saved. What can such a one have to disquiet his conscience? He has done his utmost, and waits at the foot of sovereign mercy for God to do the rest, he not being at all to blame for not having a new heart and embracing the gospel. In this resting-place Mr. M.'s book fixes and secures him, where many thousands have perished eternally.

Mr. M. has, therefore, by his "poor labors," only provided a refuge of lies for the sinner to fly to and rest in, which is perfectly agreeable to his heart while an enemy to Christ and the great salvation. Nor can he possibly be driven from this on his plan, and so long as he believes what he has written. There are multitudes of secure sinners now in New England and elsewhere, who have had some awakenings of conscience, and serious thoughtfulness about their souls and eternal interest, and are, in their view, avoiding all known sin, by doing all duty; and are resting here, and in their own imagination waiting on God to do that for them which they cannot do of themselves, and which they think they are not at all to blame for not doing. And here they will perish, unless driven from this refuge of lies, which they are as fond of as is the open profligate of his way of sinning; for men will love that which gives them ease and comfort. Such will, therefore, be pleased with Mr. M.'s book, and love it just as much as they love their own ease. And nothing will drive them from this fatal resting-place but a clear conviction of that which Mr. M. has kept wholly out of sight through his book, and has at least implicitly denied in all he has said in opposition to me, viz., that the sinner is wholly to blame for not embracing the gospel immediately; and that his want of a heart to do this, and the opposition of his heart to it, is by far the greatest crime

he ever was guilty of, for which God is very angry with him, and his wrath abideth upon him, and he is every moment exposed to sink into an aggravated destruction. As soon as they are convinced of this they will see there has been no sincerity in all their reformations and doings, but all the exercises of their hearts have been a direct and strong opposition to all that God requires of them, especially to the important, merciful declaration, which implies the whole he has to say to sinners: "This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased: *hear ye him.*" They will see that they have an amazingly hard and obstinate heart, for which they have no excuse; that their neck is an iron sinew, and their brow brass, which appears in a more clear and striking light now than ever, in that they persist in opposing and rejecting the most kind invitations of the gospel, under all the convictions of their consciences and terrifying apprehensions of the wrath to come. It is needless to say that such a person will reject Mr. M.'s book at the same instant that he is delivered from his former delusions, and is by these convictions driven from the fatal resting-place just mentioned.

IV. Mr. M.'s book tends to discourage and drive to despair every sinner who has any good degree of true, genuine conviction, if it should be believed by such, unless it drives away his convictions, and he returns to a degree of security and ease.

It has been observed before that this must be the case, according to Mr. M.'s own concession; for he allows that "sinners, under deep and genuine convictions, have been ready to look upon themselves as greater sinners than heretofore; yea, perhaps, as growing daily worse and more hard-hearted." This being the case, when such hear Mr. M.'s doctrine, that the design of the use of means is to render them less guilty and vile, and that this is the great encouragement to use means, that hereby they may be in the way of duty and obedience, and become less sinful, so as to obtain God's favorable notice and approbation, and on this account be more in the way of God's mercy, and, in the disposition and exercises of their minds, get nearer to the state of a good man, and so be more likely to be saved, — I say, when he hears this doctrine, and still views himself in the light in which Mr. M. grants all such are ready to view themselves, (and I add, in which such always view themselves, as it is agreeable to the real truth, and not to see it is to be greatly deluded, so not to be under genuine convictions,) so far as he pays any regard to it, it will strike discouragement and despair through his heart; and the glorious gospel, which offers salvation to the chief of sinners as

freely as to the least sinner in the world, which can be the only relief and remedy to such a one, will be wholly hid from his eyes, until he renounces the chief and leading doctrines of Mr. M.'s book as gross and fatal delusions.

V. Mr. M.'s book is suited very much to please Arminians and semi-Arminians, and to support and strengthen them in their opposition to the truths of the gospel.

It is certain that all these are, with no small degree of zeal, on his side of the question in this controversy; and it is easy to see the reason why they are so. Mr. M. has represented his awakened, reformed sinner in a light very agreeable to their notion of such. He is a humble sinner, who, with tenderness of conscience and trembling at God's word, reforms all known sin, and complies with all known duty. He does his utmost, and seeks the Lord with trembling, and trusts in his mercy, making this his only plea. All this the sinner comes to on principles of nature, and in this way obtains the divine approbation and favorable notice, and has nothing further to do but thus to wait on God. And what reason has such a person for any distress and terror of conscience? He is prepared to be comforted, and told that all things are well, and he has nothing to do but to hold on in this way of duty. This is exactly agreeable to their notion, and sets human nature in its fallen state in the light in which they represent it. They indeed may think that such are good Christians, and in the sure way to heaven, and have nothing to say about regeneration and a new heart, by the immediate influences of the Spirit of God, in order to bring such persons to the exercise of what is called true grace after they have attained to all that has been mentioned; and though Mr. M. does not appear fully to agree with them in this, yet they have, many of them at least, sense and discerning enough to see that herein he is quite inconsistent with himself, and that, if the things he chiefly insists upon are allowed and established, the fundamentals of their scheme are established, and the rest will follow of course. They can, therefore, patiently bear with a number of Mr. M.'s inconsistent whims (as they think them) about regeneration, saving grace, etc., while they are only mentioned incidentally, and not much insisted upon; and these things, which are important articles in their scheme, are earnestly contended for; seeing, if the latter are established, the former cannot be maintained, but will of course be neglected, if they do not fall into general contempt.

I would particularly observe here, that the doctrine that they who are the least sinners and have done most duty are, on this account, most likely to be saved, which runs through Mr. M.'s

book, contains the substance and soul of the Arminian scheme, and, if followed in all its just consequences, will subvert every important doctrine of Calvinism. For, according to this, God, in showing mercy to sinners, has respect to their moral character, and by distinguishing themselves from others, and mending their moral character by becoming less sinful, and doing those things by which they obtain God's approbation, they recommend themselves to his mercy, as more fit and proper objects of it than others whose moral character is worse, and who are greater sinners in God's sight. It is easy to see this turns every thing in this affair into the Arminian channel. It entirely shuts out the doctrine of God's sovereignty in the exercise of his saving mercy towards sinners, having mercy on whom he will have mercy, without respect to any thing in their moral character, as being better or worse; and it founds the determinations of God, with respect to the salvation of one man rather than another, on something foreseen in his moral character, by which he has done something to distinguish himself from others. It introduces the Arminian notion of justification by works; for, according to this, their own moral character, and those things by which they are less sinful, do recommend them to God's special favor, and are the reason and ground of their obtaining mercy rather than others. But the sinner is certainly justifiable by that which recommends him, and is the ground and reason of his finding mercy rather than another, though it be but a negative righteousness, and less sinfulness. And if this is of such avail with God, how much will positive virtue and goodness avail to recommend? And it follows from this that man is not in such a lost, helpless, depraved state as Calvinists have generally represented him to be, but has those good principles, in the exercise of which he may do his duty, and distinguish himself, so as to become one towards whom God's mercy more readily flows out than towards another.

Mr. M. has appeared greatly alarmed at my espousing what he says is the Arminian sense of a single text. He might reasonably be much more alarmed, if he should see his own performance in a true light, and find that the most that he had said is in support of that cause. If he shall not be made sensible of this, we may not expect to hear from him much more of the peculiar doctrines of Calvinism.

VI. Mr. M. has, by this performance, pleased and strengthened all those who are fixed upon a self-righteous bottom, who have never seen their own true guilt and vileness, and are thinking themselves better than others, especially those whose external moral conduct is not so regular and good as their own.

We have reason to think there are many such professing Christians. This may be the case, whatever sect or party they belong to, and let the principles they espouse, or profession they make, be what they will. They do at bottom think themselves better than others, on some account or other, however insensible they may be of it themselves, and have ways to hide it from their own eyes or from others. No wonder if such are well pleased with Mr. M.'s book, and zealously espouse his cause; for what he has said is agreeable to the disposition and feelings of their hearts, and to their experiences. But it is difficult to conceive how the true Christian, or the unregenerate under genuine convictions, can approve of the leading sentiments in this performance. Indeed, Mr. M. has granted that the latter cannot, or is not like to do it; for he is ready to look on himself as a greater sinner than heretofore, and there is no other way for him to think himself to grow better and less sinful but to lose his convictions, and relapse into his former delusions; so no other way to reconcile him to Mr. M.'s book, unless it be by his becoming a true convert, and embracing the gospel. But will this do it? He now has his eyes opened, in a sense and degree in which they were not before under the deepest and most clear convictions in an unregenerate state, to behold the astonishing worthiness and glory of Jesus Christ, who has practised the most amazing condescension and goodness towards him, and always stood at his door and knocked, and freely offered himself to him; and he beholds with wonder and astonishment the wisdom and glory of the gospel, and the greatness and excellence of the salvation which is by Christ; all which he has opposed, rejected, and despised, under all the scenes of awakening, convictions, and distress which he has passed through, and in this view now abhors himself, and repents in dust and ashes at the feet of Christ. And will he, in these views, look back on that horrid scene of quarrelling with God, and resolute, fixed opposition of heart to the person who now appears so glorious in his eyes, and astonishingly good and kind, in which he resisted and strove with all his might against the enlightening, awakening influences of the Spirit of God? I say, will he now think he was through all this growing less sinful than he was in a state of security, and doing his duty, though not from the highest principles, yet on the good principles of nature; and that, by thus growing better, he obtained God's favorable notice and approbation, and made approaches to the state and temper of a good man, and so got more and more into the way of mercy, until he arrived to thorough conversion? No, surely. He will view himself in a light directly contrary to

this, to a degree not easily expressed. How, then, can he approve of Mr. M.'s book?

I can easily see how such a one as our divine Teacher characterizes in the Pharisee should think the awakened, convinced sinner is become less sinful than he was before, and that God is more ready and inclined to show mercy to him on this account, and that he will look on himself much better than any open profligate whatsoever, and swell in his own thought of himself, and in his confidence of acceptance with God on this account. But I am quite mistaken in my notion of a true Christian, if he is ready to look on an impenitent rejecter of Christ, under genuine convictions, as growing better, or on himself as on the whole a less sinner than the most secure, deluded, and openly vicious sinner that he is acquainted with; nor is it easy to prove that he is in fact so. Considering his superior light and advantages, and the great and distinguishing obligations he is laid under by God's goodness to him, and considering the poor returns he makes, the weak and low degree of right exercises of heart, and the great and dreadful degree of opposite exertions and exercises, and the unspeakable degree of sinful deficiency in all his right and holy exercises, in which he falls so vastly short of the perfect rule of his duty, — I say, if we take into view all this, perhaps it will be by no means clear that he is, on the whole, less guilty and vile than he was in a state of unregeneracy; but, be this as it will, it is hard to conceive how he, in the affecting view of the dreadful degree and amazing aggravations of his own sins of omission and commission, should be ready to think himself a less sinner than others, or than he once was. Therefore, he is in no danger of using the language which the Pharisee did before God, — "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, or even as this publican." At the same time, I see not why all who understandingly approve of Mr. M.'s book should not use this very language, and why this must not be the language of their hearts, whatsoever words they use.

If any professing Christian is disposed to look on himself a less sinner, less guilty and vile in God's sight, than he was in a state of security in his youth, and that he has been growing a less sinner ever since he was first awakened, and looks round on profligate sinners as, on the whole, much more vile than himself, and approaches to God with this view of himself, as being on this account more in the way of God's mercy, and a more fit and proper object of it, — I say, if he views himself in this light, and has answerable exercises of heart, (which is, indeed, agreeably to the spirit of Mr. M.'s

whole book,) he is, I think, a strange sort of Christian, even as strange a one as was the Pharisee when he went up to the temple to pray.

VII. Mr. M.'s book is suited to please all those who think themselves good Christians and are excusing themselves in their deficiencies and want of the exercises of love to God and every Christian grace, from their utter inability and want of power to exercise and perform these things, and tends greatly to support and strengthen them in this dangerous, wicked way.

There are many, we have reason to think, of this sort. The doctrine of man's inability to do any thing spiritually good and holy of himself, they imbibe as a certain and important truth, and, as they hold it, is very agreeable to their corrupt hearts; for they, at bottom, think they are under an inability or want of power to be holy, which does really excuse them for not living in the constant exercise of faith and love to God. So that the doctrine, as they hold it, is not true, and is as agreeable to the corrupt heart of man as any that was ever invented. Hence it undoubtedly is that many are such zealous defenders of it, and have it so much in their mouths that man can do nothing of himself; and when this doctrine is set in a true, scriptural light, and it is insisted upon that man is under no inability to any good exercise but what consists in the perverseness and wickedness of his heart, for which he has no manner, no degree of excuse; that he has full power and ability to do every thing that God commands; to embrace the gospel, and be perfectly holy, were it not for his indisposition of heart and unwillingness to do it; and that the whole difficulty lies here, and is just the same as in any other case where a person is backward and unwilling to do what is proposed to him, only as it may be greater in degree, more perfect and fixed, and, therefore, that this inability, and inexcusable, voluntary, aggravated wickedness are one and the same thing, and the more of this sort of inability there is the more vile is the person, and so much more guilty and inexcusable, — I say, when they hear this they are greatly displeased and alarmed, and cry out of it as Arminianism, or a very bad and dangerous doctrine, because it deprives them of their sweet resting-place and refuge to which they have been used to flee and get ease to their consciences, and avail themselves of an excuse, so as not to feel themselves guilty for that which is indeed their greatest sin, and the chief of all their wickedness.

Such persons as these, instead of confessing their sins, are hiding them from their own eyes, and excusing themselves in that for which they ought to be greatly ashamed and blush

before God; so have never been in any good measure convinced of sin, but are really justifying themselves before God in their greatest wickedness; and they are of a spirit and temper as contrary to true Christianity as can well be imagined; and the doctrine of man's impotency, as they hold it, is really as contrary to the truth, and as agreeable and pleasing to corrupt nature, as are any of the Arminian doctrines which assert man's self-sufficiency to all that is required of him, and more so in some respects.

All such will, no doubt, like Mr. M.'s book, and be agreeably supported and strengthened by it. But this is only to confirm them in a wicked course, highly dishonorable to Christ and the gospel; in a delusion which, if persisted in, will prove ruinous to them, whatever great experiences and remarkable discoveries and comforts they may boast of.

SECTION VI.

In which Mr. Mills's speaking against metaphysical Reasoning and Arguments is briefly considered.

Mr. M. has not expressly asserted that any of my reasoning in support of what he opposes is metaphysical, much less has he attempted to point out any particular instances of metaphysical reasoning in any passage of mine upon which he remarks. However, he often speaks of metaphysics, metaphysical subtilties, abstruse metaphysical reasoning, etc., with disapprobation, and in such a manner as will lead the reader to think he has to deal with an antagonist who is very metaphysical. Now, metaphysical reasoning is the same, in his account, with abstruse, unintelligible, fallacious, and deceitful reasoning, on which there is no dependence, and ought to be wholly disregarded and avoided. The most remarkable passages of his on this head are the following: "Here, removing as far as possible from all abstruse metaphysical reasoning and far-fetched consequences, at least doubtful and uncertain, of which kind experience teacheth that what is called demonstration in one age is rejected in another, and what is called so by one man is of no validity with another, and ofttimes with the same man at different dates of his life; let us, I say, removing as far as possible from these things," etc. Again: "Another ground of this mistake, as it appears to me, is too great a fondness for, and dependence upon, conclusions come into, as the result of subtile metaphysical reasoning, as though they were certain and might be depended on, while nothing is more common than mistakes in these cases."

It is to be observed here, that what he condemns, and professes to keep at the greatest distance from, under the name of *metaphysical reasoning*, includes all reasoning that can be used by men; for it is common for men to make mistakes in reasoning, in whatever way they reason; and the best and clearest reasoning, which is real demonstration, is called so in one age, and rejected in another; and the most strong and clear reasoning will be allowed to be so with one man, and yet be of no avail with another; and this may be the case with the same man at different periods of his life. Therefore, to keep at the greatest possible distance from all reasoning of which these things may be predicated, is the same as to keep at the greatest possible distance from all reasoning whatever.

Besides, it is worthy to be considered, perhaps, whether Mr. M. has helped himself or his reader by all this caution; and whether he has not, after all, fallen into such a way of reasoning, whether it be called metaphysical or not, as is of no validity with himself in different dates of his life, and by which he has repeatedly reasoned himself into contradictions at the same time of life. Of this, the reader who has attended to the foregoing sections will judge. If, by abstruse metaphysical reasoning, be meant nice distinctions where there is no difference, or using words without any distinct and clear ideas, — affirming and denying the same thing at different times, and drawing opposite consequences from the same premises, — mistaking and misrepresenting the thing about which the question is, perhaps Mr. M.'s Inquiry is as remarkable an instance of such metaphysics as any this age has produced.

But if by metaphysical reasoning and arguments is meant making critical and clear distinctions between those things which really differ, and carefully examining those subjects to the bottom which have been treated in a confused, intricate manner, or have been thought by many quite abstruse and unintelligible, there is no reason why any one should try to keep at a distance from this, or avoid it in any instance; for to do so is only to confuse and bewilder himself, and to take a method to keep himself in ignorance with respect to the most important and interesting subjects. And it will be evident to any one who will allow himself to think that the Holy Scriptures cannot be in any good measure understood, and the consistency of one passage with another discovered, if such reasoning as this is neglected. And this is, in effect, laying aside all clear reasoning on any subject, and to make reason itself a very useless thing, and to substitute something else in the stead of reason.

Many have conceived such an aversion to what they call metaphysics, and carefully keep at such a distance from every thing which to them is abstruse, uncertain, and difficult to be understood, that they are never like to know any thing that requires close attention of thought and any degree of accurate reasoning, or make any progress in the most useful knowledge. And, what is worse, they do what they can to prevent others from entering into a free, critical, and painful inquiry after truth, especially those who are in their youth and are coming upon the stage, by gravely cautioning them against meddling with metaphysical subjects, and dark, abstruse matters, and directing them to attend only to the things that are plain and easy, and require no metaphysical arguments to investigate or support them. Unhappy is the young student in divinity who has this advice, and is influenced by it; for, by acting upon this maxim, and endeavoring to keep at the greatest possible distance from metaphysics in this sense, he will have but little more knowledge than what he has by tradition; and this, too, will chiefly consist in a set of orthodox words, without having any intelligible meaning to them. If close and accurate reasoning falls into discredit, and a care to make clear and nice distinctions, and the utmost pains to enter deep into important subjects, and search them to the bottom, are neglected, the mind must have very little true knowledge, and can come to no proper satisfaction and certainty about any thing that requires reasoning, and is under a necessity of rusting in indolence and ignorance.

It has been the way of almost all sects and parties, when they have found themselves unable to support their cause by reason, and have been opposed and pressed with reasons and arguments which they have not been able fairly to answer, to cry out against such reasoning, and to endeavor to bring it into disgrace by calling it by some ill name. Thus, the Quakers, and almost all enthusiasts, when urged with most clear and demonstrative reasons against many of their absurd notions which they have not been able to answer, have endeavored to support themselves by calling it carnal reason, and representing it as something directly contrary to the Bible and all true religion.

And Pelagians and Arminians have been in too many instances treated so by their opponents, the professed Calvinists. The former have gloried in their reasoning against the latter, as unanswerable demonstration. The latter, instead of detecting the weakness, fallacy, and absurdity of the reasoning of the former, and maintaining their cause on this ground, as well they might, have endeavored to defend themselves from

this weapon by bringing it into disgrace, and rejecting it under the name of carnal, unsanctified reason, etc. This has been so far from humbling or giving them the least conviction of their errors, that it has had a contrary effect, to a very great and sensible degree. And no wonder; for this was the direct tendency of it, as it is an implicit confession that they felt themselves worsted at reasoning.

Some of the latter, however, especially of late, have undertaken to reason with the former, and have defended the principal doctrines of Calvinism, and have been able to show that they can be supported by the strictest reason and argument, and are agreeable to the reason and common sense of mankind, as well as to the Holy Scriptures, and have detected the weakness and fallacy of much of the reasoning of the former, and have made it appear that many of their principal tenets are contrary to all reason, and imply the greatest and most palpable absurdities. Upon this, the former, unable to defend themselves any longer with their boasted reason, have affected to run down all reason and arguments used against them, only by calling them abstruse, metaphysical reasoning and notions.

And in this some professed Calvinists are joining with them to keep up the cry of *metaphysics*, either because they are too indolent and inattentive to attend to close and accurate reasoning, or find some of their own tenets in which they are inconsistent with themselves confuted by arguments which they are by no means able to answer. And thus Sandeman and his followers, sensible that they cannot so well defend their scheme of religion by reason, and confute what is urged against them from this quarter, are well on their guard against any reasoning, especially that which they cannot answer, and endeavor to keep themselves in countenance by exploding it under the name of *vain philosophy* and *carnal reason.*

It is allowed that reason may be abused and perverted to bad purposes, as well as any thing else; and men may reason very plausibly, and with the pretence and appearance of great exactness and accuracy and clear demonstration, and yet their arguments be, at bottom, very weak, sophistical, and absurd. In this case, it becomes the friends of truth to detect and show the weakness, fallacy, and absurdity of the reasoning, instead of rejecting it all only by calling it *abstruse metaphysical reasoning;* for the best and clearest reasoning may be called by such names, as well as any thing else, and often has been. And when any one takes the latter method, he will not be wronged, I conclude, if we determine that he does it purely because he is not able to answer the argument, and finds himself worsted at reasoning.

The cry against metaphysics has, of late, been increasing, by which those who make it would condemn and prejudice people against every thing in divinity which they either do not understand, or dislike, and yet are unable to show it to be contrary to Scripture or reason. Yea, some speak against teaching and vindicating those truths and doctrines which they acknowledge to be agreeable to Scripture, and contained in it, merely because they are, they say, metaphysical niceties, and so abstruse and difficult to be understood that it is much best to say nothing about them, and not trouble people with things which they never can understand.

It may be easily accounted for if this outcry is made by those who would prevent attention to doctrines which they dislike but cannot confute, or by lazy, superficial thinkers, who are not willing to be at the pains to think closely upon any subject, and at the same time have such an opinion of their own knowledge and penetration as to conclude that what they do not understand no one else does, or ever can. But it is difficult to say why any others should join with them, and it is a pity that they should be influenced by them.

Every truth in the Bible is dark and abstruse to all those who do not understand it. And though some doctrines are more easily understood than others, yet none can be well and clearly understood without thought and attention of mind; and some of the most important doctrines never will be understood by lazy, superficial, inaccurate thinkers. The Bible was never designed to be understood by those who will not be all attention to it, and study it with that exact and accurate thought and reasoning by which they may distinguish the things that differ. He only who will thus "cry after knowledge and lift up his voice for understanding, seek for her as for silver, and search for her as for hid treasures," shall understand what are the doctrines of Christianity, and find the knowledge of God. So far, therefore, as the cry of metaphysics prevails, and people are hereby held back from thinking for themselves, and are prejudiced against every thing which they now do not understand, and against all attempts to explain and vindicate any truth contained in the Bible, because at first thought it is dark and abstruse to them and they do not understand it, just so far the Bible is locked up from them, as really as it is from the common people in the church of Rome. And it is, perhaps, worthy of particular notice, that the objections made by Papists against the Bible's being read by common people are nearly the same with those which are urged by those who are for excluding all metaphysical reasoning from matters of religion, viz., that they will not understand it;

being very incompetent judges of these things, they will only puzzle and confuse their own minds, or they will reason themselves into error, think differently from one another, and so get into hurtful and endless disputes.

CONCLUSION.

The reader who has been at the pains carefully to peruse the whole of the foregoing treatise will find the unregenerate sinner set in a dreadful and very shocking light. He is dead in trespasses and sins, (Eph. ii. 1;) an entire enemy to God in his mind by wicked affections and works; and all he does is sin, even of the nature of opposition and enmity against God. (Rom. viii. 7. Col. i. 21.) And he is wholly inexcusable and perfectly to blame for every minute's continuance in this state, for every wrong exercise of heart, and for not repenting and believing the gospel. And all means used with him, all the light and advantages he has, and all his awakenings and convictions of conscience serve to aggravate and increase his guilt and vileness, and all his strivings and prayers are very sinful and vile, provoking and abominable in God's sight. He is every hour sinking deeper into guilt, and after his hard and impenitent heart treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. (Rom. ii. 5.) And this is the Scripture account of the matter.

Upon this view of the matter, the question will naturally arise, What shall he do? If one should be told that he may find this question asked more than once in the Bible, and immediately answered by inspired men, should we not expect he would eagerly search to find what the answer is, and rest satisfied in it? The answer is, "Repent, and be baptized." (Acts ii. 38.) "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." (Acts xvi. 31.) This divinely-inspired answer to this important question is plain, and easy to be understood. This is the awakened, convinced sinner's next and immediate duty; and not to do this immediately, but to do something else instead of it, is to rebel against Christ, which rebellion is aggravated and criminal in proportion to his degree of light and conviction.

It is his indispensable duty immediately to take all that blame to himself which belongs to him, and to justify God and his law which condemns him, and heartily approve of it; entirely to give up all his old objections which his heart has made against God and his ways, as wholly groundless and infinitely criminal; and heartily to renounce all his pleas in his own favor, whereby he has justified himself, and by which

he has been opposing God and quarrelling with him, and on which he has really been placing his whole dependence, which, had they been right, would have wholly excused him, and cast all the blame on God and his law; — I say, it is his immediate duty to give up all these objections and pleas with his whole heart, as being infinitely criminal, and to feel and acknowledge that he has done nothing but treasure up wrath, and that he is most justly condemned to eternal destruction.

And as there is no hope in the case of such a sinner but what arises from the truth of the gospel, even the free and sovereign grace of God in Jesus Christ therein revealed, — and as the greatest sinner is as freely invited as the least to come to Christ, and receive pardon and salvation without money and without price, — it is the sinner's duty, without delay, to drop all his prejudices and disaffection to Christ and the gospel which have heretofore blinded his eyes and hid the all-convincing evidence of its truth and glory from his heart, and to admit the evidence of the truth and divinity of the gospel, and believe with all his heart that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that God has raised him from the dead, with a hearty approbation of his character, and submission to him and trust in him as his Lord and Savior, his Prophet, Priest, and King, being heartily devoted to his service, his interest, and glory.

All this, I say, is the sinner's immediate, indispensable duty, which is to "repent and believe the gospel." To this he is, therefore, to be exhorted and urged by all proper motives, and all the instruction given him ought to be with a view to this; and unless he complies with this, and repents and turns to God, all means and advantages, all light and conviction, all his exercises, strivings, and exertions will serve to sink him deeper into deserved perdition. So long as the sinner believes this, and has his attention kept up to it, in a view and sense of the dreadfulness of damnation, he will be pained at heart, in a view of his dreadful case, and will find no ease till his heart gives up every point of controversy between him and his Maker, and he heartily embraces the gospel; and to exhort him, and set him to do any thing short of this as his duty, in doing which he will become less sinful and abate the divine displeasure against him, and be waiting on God, etc., is to divert him from that truth which is of the highest importance to him to be attended to, and to give him that ease and rest which must be taken from him, or he will perish forever.

If we will look into the Bible and carefully examine that, we shall find that sinners are nowhere exhorted to any thing short of repentance and turning from sin to God, or to any thing which does not imply this. This is what Moses and the

prophets exhort to; and Christ and his apostles inculcate this on sinners as their next and immediate duty, and exhort to nothing short of this. How, then, can any who have the Bible in their hands be at a loss how to address sinners, and not know what exhortations are to be given to them?

Some perhaps may think that, by dropping all exhortations to sinners to some doings and duty short of repentance and embracing the gospel, we condemn all the revivals of religion and supposed conversions that have taken place in former times in New England or elsewhere, as they suppose these have taken place under the preaching which has inculcated unregenerate duties, and this is the only preaching which has been successful.

Answer. If the matter is well examined into, it will, doubtless, be found that, whenever there has been any remarkable revival of religion which has been attended with such appearances and visible effects as to give reason to believe it was in any measure genuine, it has been under the instruction and preaching which has principally insisted upon the guilty, lost state of the sinner, his utter inexcusableness in rejecting Christ and the gospel, the great and aggravated wickedness of all his exercises and doings while he continues in impenitence and unbelief, the sufficiency and willingness of Christ to save all that come to him; and the exhortations which have been principally insisted upon have been to come to Christ, and embrace the gospel. And under such preaching, and in the view of these truths, sinners have been awakened and hopefully converted. Therefore, at such times especially, the complaint has been wont to be made which is made by many now, viz., that sinners were called upon and most earnestly exhorted to repent and believe, but were not told how they should do this, by being directed to a set of duties short of faith by which they should obtain it.

And if, at such times, there has been a mixture of preaching different from this, and contrary to it, and there have been exhortations to unregenerate duties, there is not the least evidence that this has had a good tendency; but we have reason to conclude that it has done hurt rather than good, so far as it had any influence.

THE IMPORTANCE AND NECESSITY

OF CHRISTIANS CONSIDERING

JESUS CHRIST

IN THE EXTENT OF HIS HIGH AND GLORIOUS CHARACTER.

A SERMON,

PREACHED AT THE SOUTH CHURCH IN BOSTON,

1768.

THE

IMPORTANCE AND NECESSITY

OF CONSIDERING

THE EXALTED CHARACTER OF CHRIST.

Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, CHRIST JESUS. — HEB. iii. 1.

THE author of this epistle has his chief attention to Jesus Christ the Mediator, and considers and exhibits his character in all its importance and grandeur, as the great, and in a sense the only, object of the Christian's faith and hope. He here represents him to be God and man, and particularly speaks of his incarnation and condescending union with his people; his humiliation and sufferings in their behalf, in which he became a sacrifice and made full atonement for sin, of which all the Jewish sacrifices were types and emblems. But he first brings into view his infinitely high, grand, and honorable character, as what gives dignity and worth to his whole person and all his works, and spreads a lustre and glory over all, and without which nothing he had to say of him as Mediator and High Priest could be understood. He considers him as having a divine nature and character, or the very nature and character of God himself, so shining in the bright glory of divinity, as one who has made all worlds, and constantly upholds all things by the word of his power; who will take to pieces and destroy the visible world, when he has by it answered the end for which he made it at first. (Chap. i. 2, 3, 10–12.) He speaks of him as the sole heir and possessor of all things, (verse 2,) and so much greater than the angels, and superior to them, who are the greatest and most noble of all mere creatures, that they are commanded to pay him the most humble obeisance and honor, and worship him as their Lord, they being all his servants, and wholly devoted to his use. (Verses 4–7.) He here represents him as exalted to the top,

the head of the universe, and reigning on the throne of God; yea, as reigning King on his throne forever. (Verse 8.)

In short, he ascribes to him the works, and gives him the titles, honors, and character which belong exclusively to the one only true God; and applies to him those words in the Book of Psalms which are addressed to the supreme God, the glorious Jehovah.

This is the august, wonderful, infinitely grand and glorious personage spoken of in the text, called the Apostle and High Priest of the Christian's profession, who is represented as most worthy of the constant and earnest attention of all Christians, whom they are, therefore, called upon attentively to consider.

These words naturally lead us to inquire what is implied in the exhortation and command here given to Christians to consider Christ Jesus; of what use and importance it is to all Christians thus to consider Christ; and then make those remarks and reflections the subject will naturally point out.

To consider Christ Jesus, is to attend to his person, character, and works with a degree of true taste and discerning, with constancy and engagedness of mind.

I say, this implies a degree of true discerning and understanding with respect to the character of Christ; for where there is nothing of this, Christ is not considered at all. If his true character is not understood or known in any degree, then he is not the object of the thoughts and attention of the mind, but something else which is different from it; for that is never the object of a person's thoughts and consideration of which he has no true idea and conception at all. Two persons may have entirely different and opposite notions of Christ Jesus; those of one may be agreeable to the truth, by which Christ's true and real character is extant in his mind; those of the other may be essentially and wholly wrong and false; yet they may use the same name to express their different and opposite ideas and notions, and ascribe them to the same person, whom they agree to call Jesus Christ. In this case, whatever thoughts and exercises the latter has about what he calls Christ, it is certain he does not truly consider this person, but something else; and his views and exercises may not be properly called Christian, for they are really directly the reverse. Unholy persons, therefore, whose hearts are in direct and perfect opposition to the excellent and glorious character of Christ Jesus, do not consider him. His character, and so the whole gospel, is hid from their minds, as they are wholly without that taste and discerning in the exercise of which Christ is known and considered. They are, therefore, represented in Scripture as ignorant of God and the

gospel. (John xvii. 3. 1 Cor. ii. 14. 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. 1 John iv. 8.) The holy only have a heart formed to that taste and discerning by which they understand the character of which we are speaking. Such are the persons called upon in the text to consider Christ Jesus — "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling."

Nor can they be properly said to consider Christ Jesus who leave out of their view the most essential and important part of his character, and in all their thoughts of him sink him down infinitely lower, and make him infinitely less, than he really is. To consider Christ Jesus, is to understand and keep in view that in his person and character which infinitely distinguishes him from all others, and in which his true excellence and glory and sufficiency as High Priest, as Mediator, and the Savior of sinners, chiefly consist. In a word, he who does not consider this *great* High Priest in all the height, grandeur, and glory of his character in which he is exhibited in the context, does not comply with the exhortation and command in the text.

This consideration also implies a steady, engaged attention of heart to this object, by which Christ Jesus may be, as it were, always present to the mind, and it may be hereby enlarged, and take in more and more of this grand and glorious object, and so "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

How useful, important, and even necessary it is for Christians thus to consider the Apostle and High Priest of their profession, Christ Jesus, will appear by attending to the following particulars: —

1. The knowledge of Jesus Christ, considered in the extent, greatness, and glory of his character, comprises the whole of Christian knowledge.

He who knows nothing of the character of Jesus Christ certainly has no degree of Christian knowledge, and really knows nothing as he ought to know; and the knowledge of this character implies all needful knowledge. In the knowledge of Jesus Christ is implied and comprised the highest and most clear knowledge of God, of the divine character and perfections, and the most important and glorious works of God. God, in all the glory of his character, is manifested and revealed in and by Jesus Christ, so that they who see him see God. (John i. 18; xii. 45; xiv. 9.) The moral character and glory of God shine with the brightest lustre in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Cor. iv. 6.) He who knows Christ knows the truths and doctrines of Christianity; he understands the precepts and duties of it; he knows where his true interest

lies; what is true enjoyment and happiness, and the way in which the children of men may obtain it. In a word, he is at the fountain head of knowledge and wisdom; and he only needs to follow the clew he has got hold of, and get perfectly acquainted with this object, in order to be perfect in knowledge and holiness. Therefore, St. Paul turned all his attention to this great High Priest, and desired and "determined not to know any thing save Jesus Christ and him crucified, in whom (he says) are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (1 Cor. ii. 2. Col. ii. 3.) And hence it is of the highest importance to every Christian that he should fix and keep his attention on Christ Jesus, and constantly make him the object of his consideration and study, that hereby he may "increase in the knowledge of God, and be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." This leads me to observe, —

2. Jesus Christ is an unbounded and infinite object of knowledge; so that there is foundation and room for constant and increasing progress in the highest and best knowledge, by attending to and considering him.

Some objects may be soon perfectly understood, and all is known that can be known of them; the theme is fully exhausted, and there is nothing further to engage the attention of the mind. But it is infinitely otherwise with respect to the knowledge of Jesus Christ. He is so great and glorious a personage, and his works are so grand and wonderful, and of such infinite and amazing influence and consequence, that a finite mind may be all attention to him, and expatiate and enlarge in views of him, without ever coming to an end or seeing all that belongs to him. He is so great, and so much is comprehended in him, that, however enlarged and grand ideas the Christian has of him already, they may, by further consideration and study, be still increased, and swift advances made without end. Yea, the more the Christian knows already of Christ, the better foundation and the greater advantage he has to know yet more, and make still swifter progress in knowledge and wisdom. It is, therefore, in this view most reasonable and important that he should be all attention to Jesus Christ. Moreover, —

3. All Christian holiness and true happiness consist, summarily, in beholding and considering Jesus Christ in the high and glorious character he sustains.

Eternal life, i. e., all Christian holiness and enjoyment, is spoken of by our divine Teacher as consisting wholly in this. "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." (John xvii.

3.) The only true God and Jesus Christ are not here distinguished as two distinct and separate beings; for, as has been just observed, the knowledge of Jesus Christ comprises the knowledge of the only true God. Therefore, St. John says of Jesus Christ, "This is the true God, and eternal life." (1 John v. 20.) Hence Christ asks for the redeemed, as that in which their happiness will consist, that they may be where he is, and behold him in the glory of his mediatorial character. His words are remarkable: "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me." (John xvii. 24.) Jesus Christ is, and will always be, the grand medium of all divine communications of knowledge, holiness, and enjoyment to the creature, especially the redeemed. He is, in this respect, "the bread of life," on whom all depend for enjoyment and life. And the more Christians in this world behold the glory of Christ, and constantly attend to and consider him, the more holy and happy they are. For he is their only support and comfort, and on him they hang all their hopes; and beholding in him, as in a glass, the glory of Jehovah, they are changed into the same image, in according and conforming to his character in the exercises of their hearts. Of what importance is it, then, that Christians should always behold Jesus Christ, and be engaged in attention to his high and glorious character!

4. The importance and necessity of the Christian's attentively considering Jesus Christ in all the greatness and glory of his character will further appear, if we consider that this character is the only ground of his pardon and acceptance with God, and is that on which all reasonable and well-grounded hope of pardon is placed.

Christ's ability and sufficiency to make atonement for sin and obtain eternal salvation for sinners so far consists in his greatness and dignity, or the excellence and worthiness of his person and character, that, was it not for this, he could have made no atonement at all. Was he not a person of infinite dignity and worthiness, and so higher, infinitely higher, than the heavens, even a divine person and truly God, he would be infinitely far from being able to make atonement for the least sin, as this is truly an *infinite evil*, carrying infinite malignity and guilt in its very nature.* Had he not been God, and so

* The infinite evil of sin may be proved not only from the infinite greatness, perfection, and excellence of God, against whom it is committed, which lay the creature under infinite obligation to him, as the obligation to love and obey is great in proportion to the greatness, worthiness, and authority of the lawgiver, and the crime of disobedience is always equal to the obligation

a person of infinite dignity and worth, his offering to interpose in the behalf of sinners, and attempting to obtain deliverance and eternal favor for them, by taking the curse on himself, making atonement, and obeying the divine law, would have been so far from availing in behalf of sinners, that it would have been itself a most daring crime, a proposal and attempt most dishonorable to God and his law, an act of high rebellion against God. Therefore, instead of being any advantage to the sinner, he would by such an undertaking, or the least inclination to do it, become a rebel himself, a sinner of the first magnitude.

If all the angels in heaven, however great, worthy, and numerous they are, while yet they are no more than creatures, should unite to interpose in the behalf of one sinner, who had been guilty of but one sin, and that the least that is possible, and offer their worthiness, yea, their whole eternal interest and happiness, and to subject themselves to perfect, eternal misery for his sake, that he might, out of respect to this, be pardoned and received to the rewards of eternal life, — I say, should all the angels in heaven thus interpose, the proposal and offer would not only be rejected, but would itself be an act of high rebellion, and carry in it the most abominable contempt of God and his law, and a virtual justifying the sinner and taking his part against God; so would bring them all under the curse, and sink them into hell, without helping the sinner at all; for such an offer and attempt would be so far from honoring God and his law, and an act of love and friendship to him, that it would carry in it a denial of God's infinite greatness and worthiness, and so be the highest affront to the divine Majesty.

violated thereby, — I say, the infinite evil of sin does not only appear from this view of the matter, but also from the malignant nature and tendency of sin.

Every transgression of God's law is an act of perfect enmity to universal being; it is against God and the creation, and tends to the complete and eternal ruin of the whole; so that, if there was nothing to counteract and restrain its influence and tendency, it would certainly issue in this. It would destroy the universe, and bring the whole, God and the creature, to a state infinitely worse than non-existence. Thus sin is, in its own nature, pregnant with infinite mischief, and tends to the total ruin of universal being, to destroy all the good of the universe, and introduce infinite, eternal evil. The tendency is so direct and strong that this would be the certain issue of it, was it not prevented by infinite power, wisdom, and goodness.

If, then, the crime of any transgression is great in proportion to the malignity of it and the greatness of the evil it tends to, — which I think none can deny, — it is hence certain that every sin against God is infinitely criminal in his sight. How fit and necessary is it, then, that the sinner should be threatened with eternal destruction! How necessary that the atonement which ransoms from this infinite evil should be something infinitely great! And is not a mere creature, any finite being, infinitely unequal to this? A desire that sin should be pardoned on the account of what such a one can do or suffer, or even a thought in favor of it, carries in it enmity to being in general, which is enmity against God.

Therefore, was not Christ infinitely higher and greater than all the angels in heaven, and did he not exceed them infinitely in excellence and worth, he could not be a High Priest in whom sinners might reasonably put any trust for pardon and acceptance with God. Yea, on such a supposition, trusting in him would not only be unsafe and dangerous, but direct rebellion against God, and infinitely criminal.*

The true Christian's hope and trust in Christ for pardon and salvation first began when he first began to see and consider him in his true character, and this great High Priest appeared to him in an infinitely grand and honorable light — in the light in which he is set in the first fourteen verses of the first chapter of John, and as he is represented in the chapters preceding our text; even the true God, who has made and does uphold all things, and who in the fulness of time was incarnate, and became a man; and to make full atonement for sin, and obtain favor and salvation for sinners, took upon him the form of a servant, and was obedient unto death. In this view of Jesus Christ, I say, the true Christian's hope and trust in him first began; and it never afterwards is exercised and flourishes in any other way but in considering Christ in this his true character, as the great High Priest; and his hope and confidence in him for pardon and acceptance is always as is his view and sense of Christ's dignity and excellence.

Well, then, may Christians be directed and exhorted always to attend to this high and glorious character, and keep it in view, so as never to lose sight of their great High Priest, Christ Jesus; for so far as he is out of view they must cease to trust in him for pardon and acceptance before God, and all true ground of hope will be out of sight.

5. The true Christian hopes for redemption from the power of sin only in the view of Christ in his high and exalted character.

When a person sees what sin is, what fast hold it has of him, how deep and strongly it is rooted in his heart, how powerful and various are the workings of it, how grievous and deadly are the disorders and wounds of his sinful heart, utterly

* What, then, shall we say of those who profess to trust in a mere creature for all this, which is the case of all who deny the divinity of Christ? But the case of such will be more particularly attended to in the sequel.

And what shall be said of those who trust in their own righteousness to recommend them to God, under whatever profession this is done? This is daring presumption and high-handed wickedness, being a direct opposition to the divine character and God's holy law. In this view, it appears that all the good works of such, in which they trust for infinitely more than they might reasonably do were they perfectly holy, are heaven-daring sins, the most abominable rebellion against God, and direct opposition to Jesus Christ and the gospel.

incurable by any finite wisdom and power,—I say, when a person becomes acquainted with his state in this respect, he finds he wants a Redeemer and Savior infinitely powerful, wise, and good, and that any other would be infinitely insufficient for him. He, therefore, could have no hope of redemption from sin by Christ, did he not view him as infinitely greater and more sufficient than any mere creature, even infinitely wise, powerful, and kind. But when he beholds and considers Christ in the height of his character, as being thus infinitely wise, powerful, and good, with whom nothing is impossible, he with confidence and joy commits his disordered, sinful, wretched soul into his hands, assured that he is able to cure and sanctify his heart, and make him perfectly holy in the most kind, wisest, and best way, though it is infinitely beyond him to see how it can be done.

Many a person, ignorant of the nature of sin and of the degree of extent and power sin had in his heart, has seen no need that he stood in of an infinite Redeemer; yea, has stupidly and foolishly thought he had a sufficiency of his own to recover himself from sin to holiness, and has trusted wholly in his own heart for it. But not so the true Christian. He finds he wants a Redeemer to deliver him from sin and bring him to perfect holiness who is higher than the heavens, has creating power, and is able to subdue all things unto himself; and in order to keep up his hope and courage, he must constantly have in view, and attentively consider, such an infinitely great and mighty Redeemer.

It does, therefore, from hence also appear how important and necessary it is that Christians should consider and constantly keep in view their Redeemer and Savior, in all the extent and grandeur of his person and character.

6. As Christians are to ask for all they want in the name of Christ, it is of importance, and even necessary, that they should well understand and keep in view the character of him in whose name they ask.

Prayer is a great and constant duty of a Christian. It is that by which he lives; and he receives all from God in the way of prayer. If he does not ask, he will not receive. Christ has directed and commanded all his disciples to ask in his name; and nothing is to be obtained by them in any other way of praying. Yea, for a sinful creature to pray in any other way or name is most presumptuous arrogance and impiety, and a direct affront to the most high Majesty of heaven and earth. But Christ has promised that whatsoever is asked in his name shall be given. But to ask in the name of Christ is to depend on his worthiness alone, as that on account of

which we shall be accepted and heard. Therefore, asking in his name supposes and implies a view and sense of heart of his greatness and worthiness. So far as the infinitely excellent and worthy character of Christ is out of sight and disregarded by any one, just so far he is without a true spirit of prayer, and does not ask in Christ's name. And on the other hand, if this great High Priest is rightly considered in all the grandeur and worthiness of his person and character, the Christian is enabled and encouraged to ask in his name, and comes with freedom and boldness to the throne of grace.

Thus important and necessary is it that Christians should always keep in view and well consider the great High Priest of their profession, as it is in this way only that they ask in his name, and are accepted and heard in their prayers and offerings.

7. It belongs to the character of Christians, "whatsoever they do, in word or in deed, to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." (Col. iii. 17.) But this is to do all they do in a view and sense of his true character, and as a hearty acknowledgment of it. Hence it appears that Christians do in no case exercise themselves and act agreeably to their profession, unless they have in view and rightly consider the character of Jesus Christ.

What now remains to be attended to is the improvement of this subject in a few reflections which are suggested by what has been said.

1. How important is it that Christ should be preached and constantly exhibited to view in all the grandeur and glory of his character, in the public instructions which Christians sit under!

That which Christians ought chiefly to attend to, and which is highly useful and most necessary to be always considered by them, ought to be constantly set before them and proposed to their consideration by public teachers. To preach the gospel, is to preach Christ; to exhibit and display his true character; and that preaching which is not adapted to this end, and has no reference to him, is not preaching the gospel, nor is it likely to be of any great advantage to Christians.

Many professed preachers of the gospel have been greatly deficient here. Many leave Christ very much, or altogether, out of their preaching; so most or all they say is not the gospel, but something else, which, though it may be applauded by many, is really very low, insipid, and mean, in comparison with the gospel of Christ, who is the wisdom of God and the power of God to the true Christian; and there have been many who, when they have spoken of Christ, have left out the most

essential part of his character, and never bring it into view in all they say of him. They often use the name of Christ, and have much to say about him; but all they have said of him is either not true, so gives him a wrong and false character, or, if true, it falls short of his whole character; yea, leaves the most essential part of it, and what may be justly considered as comprising all its glory, wholly out, unthought of, and neglected. If they do not expressly deny the infinite greatness, the divine splendor and glory, of Christ's person and character, which is essential to his Godhead, they never, or rarely, say any thing about it, or that which implies it, so as to bring it into view and hold it up to be attentively considered.

However the multitude may admire some such preachers, it is certain the true Christian will not be fed, but famish and starve, under such preaching as this; while that which is the proper support, food, and life of his soul, even Christ in his true and glorious character, is not set before him.

What, then, shall we say of those who expressly deny the divinity of Christ, and represent him as no more than a mere creature? If they do not preach Christ who silently pass over his divine dignity and glory, — infinitely the greatest and most essential part of his character, and without which there is nothing in his person and character that can be the reasonable ground of hope, support, and life to the true Christian, — must not they who expressly deny that he is the true God, and consequently hold that he is only a mere creature, be justly looked upon and treated as preaching against Christ, and perverting and overthrowing the whole gospel? They may speak in strong terms, and high and pompous strains, of the dignity and excellence of Christ; of free grace and salvation by him; of atonement by his blood; of the high esteem and love all Christians ought to exercise towards him; of the importance of faith and trust in him, etc.; but when it is considered that, whatever pompous words they use, they are applied to one infinitely below God, being but a mere creature, all they say on this head appears to be flat and low, and is really nothing but unmeaning jargon, which is infinitely dishonorable to Christ, and leaves the Christian without any true ground of hope and comfort. It is infinitely dishonorable to God to suppose that a mere creature, be he the greatest that ever God made, or that he can make, — I say, that a *mere creature* should make atonement for sin; such atonement that God will, out of respect to that, pardon the sinner; and that he should pay such obedience, and his name, his person, and character should be so acceptable and worthy in God's sight as that, from regard and love to him, a guilty wretch should be received to

the highest favors. I say, such a notion is infinitely dishonorable to God, the Lawgiver, as it is a denial of the infinite evil of sin, and consequently of his infinite excellence, dignity, and worthiness. This is also infinitely dishonorable to the Mediator, and, in effect, robs him of all his glory, and degrades him infinitely more than any mere creature can be degraded and dishonored on any possible supposition whatsoever.

And this robs the true Christian of all hope; for on this supposition he is left without any mediator that he can trust in. He, in a view and sense of the infinite worthiness and glory of the most high God; of the reasonableness and excellence of the divine law, and, consequently, of the infinite criminalness and malignity of sin, which brings into view his own infinite odiousness and ill desert, — he in this view, I say, feels that no person can make atonement for him but one of infinite dignity and worth, who has something infinitely great to offer. And did he not see and believe in such a one, he must sink into absolute despair, and could not reasonably *desire* that any mercy should be showed to him. He, therefore, who denies the divinity of Christ, does what he can to rob the Christian of all his treasure — of all his hopes — of all his salvation. And the reason why he himself wants no greater mediator and savior than a mere creature, and calls that an atonement for sin which such a one has made and trusts in it, — I say, the reason of this is, his blindness and insensibility with respect to his own character, even his infinite guilt and vileness, which is grounded in his shocking insensibility of the glory of the divine character, and enmity to it.

This view of the matter will afford us, I conceive, a plain and easy answer to a question which has been sometimes put, viz., whether they who believe the divinity of Jesus Christ, and could not trust in him for pardon and salvation did they not consider him to be truly God as well as man, may and ought to have charity for those, and look on them as good Christians, who expressly deny this doctrine, and represent those as real idolaters who pay any regards and honors to him which may not be given to a mere creature.

These persons have, in truth, infinitely different ideas and thoughts of Jesus Christ, and, consequently, must differ in the leading and essential doctrines of Christianity; so that they do not all know and acknowledge the true and only Savior, or believe in the same person and character. If he who believes in Jesus Christ as a divine person, as truly God, and places all his hopes of salvation by him on this foundation, is right, — which he must think himself to be, — then he who denies this article is wrong; and so wrong, that he does, in the view

of the other, leave out of his thoughts and religion infinitely the greatest and most glorious part of the character of the Mediator, even so as quite to spoil it and render it worthless; so does not consider, believe, and trust in the same person and character, which is the object of his faith, but one infinitely different. How can these two walk together, who are so far from being agreed that they oppose each other most directly in the highest and most leading article of Christianity, in their infinitely different and opposite notions of the character of the author of it, and which really comprises the whole? The former looks on the other as robbing Christ of his chief glory, and denying that to belong to him which is the only ground of faith and trust in him. How, then, can the professed faith of the latter in one who, in the view of the former, can be no more a savior of sinners than Mahomet himself, or any of the imaginary deities of the heathen, recommend him to his charity any more than if he made no profession at all? Yea, does not his profession lie against him, seeing it is most dishonorable to Christ, and even a high degree of blasphemy against him, and is a most glaring evidence of his ignorance of God and of himself, yea, of his stupidity, pride, and enmity to God, that he can trust to a mere creature as a sufficient savior for him, who can make a proper and full atonement for his sin, and has worthiness enough to recommend him to God? Surely such a one (if his heart is answerable to his profession) does not know what sin is; is quite insensible of his own unworthiness and guilt; is conceited and proud with respect to his own character; and has the most dishonorable, contemptuous thoughts of God.

In a word, if Christ, the Redeemer and Savior of sinners, is God, — and if he was not so, he would be infinitely unable to atone for the least sin, or save one sinner, — then he who acknowledges no other Christ and savior but a mere creature changes the glory of the only true God and Savior into a corruptible, weak, helpless man, and puts his trust in this creature of his own imagination for that which a divine person, a God only, can do; so is giving that honor to the creature which belongs to God alone, and is really a stupid, wicked idolater, as really so, and doubtless much more criminally than they who worship and trust in gods that can neither hear, nor see, nor go.

And must *he* be esteemed a pious man and a good Christian, while, according to his profession, he is guilty of all this pride, and contempt of God and the Redeemer, and lives in the practice of the most abominable and aggravated idolatry? If such may pass for good men, friends to God and his law,

and to Jesus Christ, as well may all the Popish and heathen idolaters that have been, or now are, in the world.

I know some who would be thought to believe the divinity of Christ, or, at least, do not deny this doctrine, have declared their charity for those who expressly deny it, and have been forward and zealous to rank some of them among the number of eminently holy men and good Christians. But this is not only very absurd and shocking, but really carries with it no small degree of impiety and profaneness. It seems to be trifling with Christianity at a great rate. Surely Christianity is not worth much, if it is no matter of importance whether the Author of it, and who is the revealed Savior for sinners to trust in, be a God, or a mere creature, so that they may be equally good Christians, whatever is their belief with respect to Jesus Christ.* If it is no matter what they think of Christ, but may differ infinitely in their sentiments of his person and character, then it is certainly no matter whether they have any thoughts about Christ at all, or any ideas of him, or belief in him; and the Deist, who rejects Christ's whole character, may be as good a man, and as certainly happy forever, as the best Christian, who has the most just idea of Christ, and is a true believer in him. It would, therefore, be no wonder at all if they who are so forward and zealous to dub Arians good Christians, and canonize them as eminent saints, should extend their charity further, even to professed Deists, who blaspheme the name of Christ, and should call upon them and professed

* I desire it may be considered, whether the ordaining councils, who neglect to examine candidates for the ministry with respect to their religious sentiments, and they who zealously oppose such examinations, do not, by this conduct, openly declare that it is with them no matter of importance what men believe, what their sentiments are, and what doctrines they hold with respect to Jesus Christ, or what thoughts they have of his character and religion; that they may be "apt to teach," and "hold fast the faithful word," so as to "be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convince the gainsayers," whatever sense they put upon the words in the Bible, or though they have no understanding of them at all. And is not this, in effect, openly to declare that the truths of the gospel are of no importance, and that Christianity is really but a trifling affair?

The conduct of these gentlemen is really surprising, and none need to be at a loss what will be the fate of Christianity, so far as their influence reaches. All the distinguishing, important doctrines of it will be neglected; and instead of preaching the gospel, sermons will be either insipid dissertations upon something else, or filled with stupid inconsistence; else be only florid harangues, without any meaning; unless, perhaps, when times and circumstances will bear it, another system of doctrines will be preached up, which at present are somewhat unpopular, therefore cannot be with safety expressly and openly espoused. For the sake of which, that they may be privily introduced, and from a desire and design to extirpate the more commonly received, popular doctrines, many think they have good reason to conclude this method with respect to candidates is gone into.

Christians (as a noted writer has, indeed, done already *) to mutual forbearance and charity; for, though they differ so much about the character of Christ, this is but a trifling affair, while they are agreed in all the most important articles of religion.

If Arians are to be esteemed good Christians by those whose thoughts of Christ are infinitely different from theirs, why may not the Mahometans also be ranked among truly pious and good men, in the sure way to eternal life? They have not the good luck, indeed, of being called Christians, but they acknowledge Jesus Christ to be a true Prophet, sent of God; so are, in a sense, believers in him. They may, perhaps, have as high notions of the character of Christ as many professed Christians who deny his divinity; though, by the unhappy prejudices of education, they set Mahomet above him, as being a greater person. Shall this mistake damn them? Surely no, if the errors and blasphemies the Arians are guilty of relating to Jesus Christ, in the clear sunshine of divine revelation, shall not be fatal to them.†

In short, these charitable persons are either themselves Arians, and do not really believe the divinity of Jesus Christ, but are, for certain reasons, unwilling to let their sentiments on this head be known, so are industriously concealing them; or if, through the force of education, or on some other ground, they assent to this doctrine, they do not understand the true reason and import of it; so have never seen their need of such a Savior; consequently, have never yet considered the Apostle and High Priest of their profession as all true Christians do. In this view, their extensive charity, upon which they value themselves, and of which they boast, is so far from being in their favor as an evidence of the greatness of their minds, or the goodness of their hearts, that it is rather a very clear and striking evidence that they have never yet understood the true

* Chubb. See his Tracts.

† I know this will be thought by some exceedingly uncharitable, harsh, and cruel. They will say, "It is intolerable, and argues a vast degree of arroganee and pride, as well as ignorance and a base contractedness of mind, to doom all those to destruction who have not been able to see that Jesus Christ is the true God, and equal with the Father. This is a very disputable point, and many great, and to all appearance good, men have taken the negative side."

Answer. All this may as truly, and with as much propriety, be said of professed Deists. It is a very disputable point, whether Jesus of Nazareth was sent of God, or was a wicked impostor; that is, it has been greatly disputed, as much, perhaps, as any one point that respects Christianity. And many who are acknowledged to be great men, and some, at least, whose moral conduct has been regular and unexceptionable, have not been able to see the evidence of his divine mission, and have improved all their powers and advantages in opposition to Christianity.

nature and genius of genuine Christianity; that they do not know Christ; so have not received the witness that God has given concerning him, and truly believed on his name.*

2. This subject naturally introduces a short, but most interesting and important question, which Jesus Christ himself once put to those to whom he was speaking. It is this: What think ye of Christ?

We may consider this question as now urged upon us all. What views and apprehensions have we of Jesus Christ? How, and in what a light, do we consider this Apostle and great High Priest of our profession? Upon this, our character and our eternal state depend. We are true Christians or not, according as our thoughts and views of Christ are; a true answer to this question, therefore, will determine our character as Christians, and upon this our eternal state will turn. If we know Christ, and have right views and thoughts of him, we are then his friends indeed, and shall dwell with him forever. But if his true character is not understood by us, and our views and thoughts of him are essentially wrong, and we

* Objection. We are told that he who has not charity is nothing. Charity is the ornament and glory of a Christian; and where this is not, there is no religion. Is it not astonishing, then, that any should be condemned for their charity? — that this should be reckoned against them, as an argument that they who exercise it in the utmost stretch of it are no Christians?

Answer. In such a way of talk as this the word *charity* is greatly abused, and perverted from its true meaning, at least the Scripture sense of it. Charity is love to God and our neighbor, which is the whole that the divine law requires; and, therefore, comprises all true holiness. This love to God and man has no tendency to lead the person who exercises it to think all are good men and true Christians who profess Christianity; much less does it consist in this. But, on the contrary, it gives a degree of true discerning in spiritual things which others have not; and leads the mind to such attention to the divine character, and fills the heart of the true Christian with such a tenderness and jealousy for the honor of this character, that he more readily discerns and tenderly feels what is opposition to it. And he will be ready to hate those who, in their words and profession, appear to hate God, and look on them as enemies to God and to himself who rise up against God, (Ps. cxxxix. 21, 22,) whatever their external conduct may otherwise be; for God may be as directly and visibly opposed in profession and words as in conduct. And to have no discerning in this case, but to embrace those as good Christians who openly oppose and speak against Christ, is so far from being an exercise of charity, that it is a glaring evidence of their want of true love to Christ.

St. Paul, in the exercise of all this charity, pronounced those accursed who preach another gospel; and told the Galatians that a mistake about the ground of the sinner's acceptance with God was fatal. (Gal. i. 8, 9; ii. 21; v. 2.) And St. John, while he is in the warmest manner recommending charity or love, declares that they who hold not the truth concerning Christ had no interest in God's favor, and orders Christians to reject them. (2 John 9, 10.)

Many speak of charity as if it wholly consisted in a readiness to think every one a true Christian. And the more unlike a Christian any one appears, speaks, and acts, the higher degree of charity is required to believe he is a good Christian. And he is the best man who can exercise the greatest stretch of charity towards them who, in this sense, have the most need of it.

continue in this error and darkness until death, we shall be excluded his presence, and dwell in darkness forever. How greatly, then, does this question concern us all! We may well think of it with solemn attention and self-application. And let it not be put off now without an answer. Suffer me, then, to urge this question upon this auditory, by descending to a few particulars.

Have you well considered how *great* a High Priest Christ is? that though he was in the world a mean, despised man, he is the Maker and Lord of all things, has infinite dignity and worthiness, is infinite in power, wisdom, and goodness; is a Priest on a throne, having all power in heaven and earth, and all things in his hands? (Zech. vi. 13. Matt. xxviii. 18.) Have you been fully convinced that such a High Priest became you, who is higher than the heavens; and that no other is sufficient to make atonement and reconciliation for the sins of men?

Have you rightly considered Christ's infinite excellence and worthiness? In the view of this, have your hearts been attracted to him in the exercise of the highest esteem and love? And in a sense of your own infinite unworthiness and guilt, — which is in the most striking manner declared in all he has done and suffered, — and in a view of his infinite excellence and worthiness, of his boundless merit and righteousness, do you trust in him alone for pardon and acceptance with God? Is his merit and worthiness the only thing you trust in to recommend you to God? and with respect to this do you make mention of his name alone, placing all your hopes on him, and asking all you want in his name, so making him alone your great High Priest?

What do you think of the knowledge of Jesus Christ? Does this appear to be happiness and life, in comparison with which you count all other attainments as worthless and nothing? (See Phil. iii. 8.) Do you find you can have no peace, comfort, and joy but in a view and sense of the character of Christ? that, so far as he is out of sight, darkness and death spread over your soul? that your heart is warmed, refreshed, and invigorated only in the light and shining of this Sun of Righteousness?

Do you trust in Christ alone as your Redeemer from the power of sin and Satan? In a sense of the dreadful disorders of your soul by sin, how defiled and ruined you are by it, do you hope in him alone as your Sanctifier?

Do you long and seek after conformity to Christ in the temper of your minds, and in your conduct, as the greatest privilege? and is the happiness and heaven you are desiring,

that which shall consist in being where he is, and beholding his glory?

3. What has been said may be improved as an excitement to all professing Christians to hearken to the exhortation in the text, and attentively consider the Apostle and High Priest of their profession, Christ Jesus.

Your Christianity, your comfort, and happiness all lie in this. In his light alone can you see and enjoy light, even the light of life. Would you make progress in knowledge and holiness, and be wise unto salvation, you must sit constantly at the feet of this great Apostle and divine Prophet, who teaches not as man teaches. If this Sun of Righteousness has risen upon you, and you have ever beheld his glory, by constantly attending to his person and character, "ye shall go forth and grow up as calves in the stall; and your path shall be as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." (Mal. iv. 2. Pr. iv. 18.)

Jesus Christ is an object so vastly extensive and infinitely great that he cannot be attended to too much and too long. No matter how soon and early in life persons begin to consider Christ in earnest. The theme is boundless, the subject inexhaustible. Here, then, is a foundation laid for the most attentive and engaged inquiries and highest and growing entertainment of the redeemed forever in heaven, "where there is no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God does lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." (Rev. xii. 23.)

I shall close in the words of St. Peter, with which he concludes his second epistle: "Ye, therefore, beloved, seeing ye knew these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever. Amen."

TWO SERMONS.

I.

ON THE NECESSITY OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE LAW OF GOD, IN ORDER TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF SIN.

II.

A PARTICULAR AND CRITICAL INQUIRY INTO THE CAUSE, NATURE, AND MEANS OF REGENERATION.

SERMON I.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S LAW NECESSARY IN ORDER TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF SIN.

I had not known sin but by the law. — Rom. vii. 7.

There is no need of entering into a critical consideration of the context, in order to our seeing what is the truth here asserted by St. Paul, to which I propose to lead the attention of this auditory in my present discourse. St. Paul here tells us how he came to the knowledge of sin, viz., by the law; i. e., by the knowledge of the law, and that there was no other possible way or medium whereby he could get the knowledge of sin; and what Paul asserts of himself here may with equal truth be affirmed of all other persons. There is no other possible way for them to come to the knowledge of sin but by the law; therefore, the plain and important truth contained in these words is, *the knowledge of God's law is absolutely necessary in order to the knowledge of sin.*

In discoursing on this proposition, I propose to consider what we are to understand by the law; why, and in what sense, the knowledge of this law is necessary in order to the knowledge of sin; and then close with some remarks which will be naturally suggested by the view we shall have of the subject.

Of the law, by which is the knowledge of sin, the following general definition may be given: —

It is the eternal rule of righteousness, which is essential to the being and glory of God's moral government and kingdom, and is in a sense the foundation of it, pointing out and declaring the duty of rational creatures, or moral agents, as what is fit and proper to be required of them, and containing the rule of God's conduct towards them, as their moral Governor.

The proposition in our text, at first view, shows us the importance of the inquiry we have now entered upon. If the knowledge of sin is to be attained in no way but by the knowl-

edge of God's law, then it is of the highest importance to us that we should not make a mistake here, but clearly understand what the law is. I may, therefore, depend upon the serious and close attention of all here present while I am attempting to throw light on this subject, and illustrate the foregoing general definition of laws by some particular observations.

And here let it be observed, that this law respects all the powers and faculties of creatures considered as moral agents, and all their exercises and conduct, both internal, even all the thoughts and motions of their hearts, and external, in their outward conduct and behavior. In a word, it respects the heart, or will, in all its motions and exercises; and it is the rule of every moral agent in all places and at all times, not leaving him at liberty to act without regard to this law in any one instance, so long as he exists a moral agent.

And this is a most perfect rule, neither too strict nor too lax; not requiring too much or too little in any instance; but points out and prescribes what is exactly and perfectly fit and right in all cases. So that every voluntary exercise of the creature is either in perfect conformity to it, and so is perfectly right, or, as far as it is not so, is wrong, and a violation of it. There are, therefore, in truth, no exercises or conduct of the moral agent which are indifferent, neither right nor wrong, because they all are to be measured by this rule, and so far as they are conformed to it they are right; and just as far as they are not so, they are wrong and corrupt — there being no medium in the case between right and wrong, virtue and sin.

Moreover, let it be particularly observed that this rule is the law of God. It is the voice of God to his creatures; his command, and the rule which he himself has set up; and, therefore, it is clothed with his authority.

A law always supposes a legislator, and that he has right and authority to make such a law and issue such commands; and the law is attended or clothed with the whole of his authority, all his right and power to dictate and command. So that any law is binding and has force just in proportion to the degree of authority the legislator has over those to whom he gives law, and the right he has to command. Where there is no authority, there is no right to dictate or command any thing; and whatever is in such a case declared or proposed by one being to others, it has nothing of the nature of law, but is only an exhortation or entreaty, which an equal or inferior, who has no sort or degree of authority over another, may use and practise as well as any one else.

The law of God is, therefore, clothed with infinite authority,

even all the authority he has over his creatures to dictate and command. It may be truly and safely said that God cannot make a law which shall be attended with less authority, less than even all the authority he has, as it is impossible he should be divested of it, or lay it aside in any instance, or in the least degree; and that this authority is infinite, or beyond all bounds or limits, is most demonstrably certain. God is infinite in his being and greatness, in his excellence and worthiness, in his superiority to the creature, and so in his right to dispose of and dictate to him. If that which gives him authority, or that wherein his authority consists, is infinite, then the authority itself is infinite; that is, it is so great that it is beyond all limits, and is infinitely more and greater than the authority of any finite being can possibly be.

And hence the law of God becomes infinitely binding, and the violation of this law in the least instance may truly be said on this account, and in this view, to be infinitely wrong, and so the crime of it to be infinitely great. For the transgression of any rule or law must be more or less criminal according as the authority of the legislator is greater or less, because the obligation to obey it must bear a proportion to this; and the crime of every transgression is greater or less, in proportion to the degree of obligation the sinner is under to the contrary. If any being has ten degrees of authority over another to command and give law to him, and no more, then he to whom the command is given is under ten degrees of obligation to obey, and his refusal to do it will have ten degrees of criminalness in it and no more; and if he is under law to another being who has a hundred or a thousand degrees of authority over him, but yet a limited authority, he is under ten or a hundred times greater obligation to obey him than he is to obey the other; so his crime in not obeying will be ten or a hundred times greater than in the other case, though it will yet be a limited or finite crime. But if another being gives law to him who has authority beyond all possible degrees or limits, i. e., truly infinite authority, his crime in disobeying, in this case, will also exceed all degrees or limits, and be really and properly infinite.

This law of which I am speaking consists in two main branches; one points out our duty to God, and the other our duty to our fellow-creatures and to ourselves. This is all contained and expressed in the law of the ten commandments, published to the children of Israel by God from Mount Sinai, and afterwards wrote by God himself on two tables of stone, and laid up in the ark, which was placed in the holy of holies, under the mercy seat or propitiatory. The first four of these

express our duty to God; the last six our duty to our fellow-creatures. And this law is all summed up in the most comprehensive manner, by our divine Teacher, in the following words: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. And thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." (Matt. xxii. 37–39.) The law of God, then, requires nothing but love — love exercised in a perfect manner and degree, and expressed in all possible proper ways. In this the whole of the duty and obedience of moral agents consists.

Let it be further observed, that a penalty is annexed to this law, which consists in a threatening to the disobedient. This is essential to a law. Whatever rule or directory is proposed and set up without any threatening to him who disregards it, so that he exposes himself to no more evil of any kind by transgressing it than by the most strict observance of it, cannot have the nature and force of a law. It has been just observed that authority is essential to law, so that where there is no authority there can be no law; and that the law must be clothed and enforced with all the authority of the legislator. Now, this authority is exercised and expressed in the threatening to the disobedient, and cannot possibly be expressed in any thing else, or in any other way. That rule which carries not in it a threatening to the transgressor is attended or clothed with no authority at all; no authority is expressed or exercised; and, therefore, it has not, it cannot have, the nature and force of a law.

And this penalty or the evil threatened must be exactly answerable to the authority of the lawgiver and the just desert of the transgressor. The authority of a law lies wholly in the threatening, or appears and is expressed only in that, as has been just observed; and it is in this that the authority of the lawgiver is exhibited. Therefore, the greater and more sacred the authority of the legislator is, the greater and more dreadful must be the punishment threatened; and this will proportion the punishment of the crime; for, as has been shown, the crime of the transgressor of a law is greater or less according to the degree of dignity and authority of the lawgiver. If a legislator should annex a threatening to his law which is not answerable to his sacred authority and worthiness to be obeyed, and so not equal to the crime of disobedience, he would so far lay aside or divest himself of his own proper character by not asserting and acting up to it; and the law would be so far unbecoming of him, and not agreeable to the truth and reason of things, and so not perfectly right and excellent. It is, therefore, certain that, whenever a legislator will assert and maintain

his proper character and authority, he must threaten disobedience to his command with a punishment exactly answerable to his character and authority, so that this shall be properly and fully expressed in the threatening. Neither a greater nor a less punishment must be threatened; for to threaten and inflict a greater punishment would be unjust and tyrannical, and to threaten and inflict a less would be injurious to his own character, contrary to the reason and nature of things, and many ways hurtful to the subject.

Therefore, the penalty of the law of God must be infinite; the punishment threatened to the sinner must be an finfinite evil, something infinitely great and dreadful, as the dignity, majesty, and authority of the lawgiver are infinite. Any thing less than this would be infinitely too little for the most high God to threaten, infinitely too mean and low for him; for, to threaten sin against himself with a finite evil only, would be, in effect, to dethrone himself, and renounce his proper character and authority more, yea, infinitely more, than the greatest earthly monarch would do it, with regard to himself, if he should publicly declare that, however much his laws should be disregarded and trampled upon by his subjects, they should be exposed to no evil by their rebellion, should have his favor, and enjoy all the benefits of his kingdom to as great a degree as if they were perfectly obedient. For such an earthly monarch would, in the case proposed, give up infinitely less than the most high Majesty of heaven and earth would do, by threatening rebellion against his law with only a finite punishment; as this is infinitely less than that which is necessary in order properly to express and maintain his own character and authority.

On the whole, it appears, from what has been observed, that the law of God requires perfect, persevering obedience, on pain of eternal damnation. I say, "on pain of eternal damnation;" for, as the punishment is an infinite evil, it must be eternal, as an infinite evil cannot be inflicted on a finite subject in any limited or finite duration. No less than this is comprised in the curse of God which is denounced against every one who does not persevere in perfect conformity to his law. "For it is written," says St. Paul, speaking of this law, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." (Gal. iii. 10.) This punishment, this infinitely dreadful evil, and not separation of soul and body, or annihilation, is intended by the death which St. Paul says is the wages of sin, (Rom. vi. 23,) and is the same that was threatened to our first parents, if they should transgress God's law. (Gen. ii. 17.) This is the proper death

of a moral agent, even a separation from all good unto all evil, and that forever. For it is not consistent with the being of moral government that the subjects of it should ever cease to be. This I think may easily be proved; but I have not time for it now.

I proceed to observe, that as this law is founded in the reason and nature of things, is the most exact and perfect expression of the perfections and glorious character of the supreme Disposer of all things and moral Governor of the world, and is perfectly, and, as I may say, infinitely right, so it must take place in its full force and extent, with regard to every creature in the universe that is capable of being under law and moral government. We may be sure God will not release any moral agent from his obligations to this law, as it is most certain he cannot do it consistent with his character as moral Governor of the world. This law, therefore, stands firm as mountains of brass, as the pillars of heaven. It stands forever the same most perfect and glorious law, sure and unshaken as the kingdom of God itself, and will no sooner be removed; for to remove or disannul this, is to destroy God's moral kingdom. It is easier for heaven and earth to pass or be dissolved than one tittle of this law to fail. (Luke xvi. 17.) The righteousness of it is everlasting, and God hath founded it forever. (Ps. cxix. 144, 152.) This law cannot be repealed, set aside, or abated; not the precepts of it, for nothing is required but what is perfectly proper and right; nor the penalty, for this is an essential part of the law, and is perfectly equal and right; and to set this aside, in whole or in part, is just so far to destroy the law, and even to contradict and efface the divine character, as has been shown.

Jesus Christ did not, therefore, come into this world and assume the character of Mediator in order to get this law repealed or abated, as many have very absurdly and wickedly believed and taught. So far from this was his design, that he came to "magnify the law and make it honorable," agreeably to the ancient predictions concerning him. And in this his merit and righteousness consist, by which sinners obtain pardon and salvation through him. He warned all against such a notion as this when he first entered on his public ministry. "Think not," says he, "that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." The law was, indeed, in the way of the sinner's salvation, and this was the ground of the necessity of the incarnation, sufferings, and obedience of the Son of God. But this was not to take the law out of the way, by setting it aside; but to fulfil it, to obey it, and suffer the penalty of it instead of the sinner, so

that the law might be as much regarded and honored as if the curse had fallen on the sinner; and that God, the supreme Lawgiver, might be just, just to his own character and law, and yet justify the ungodly, the infinitely guilty and ill-deserving sinner who believeth in Jesus.

The unbeliever, the Christless sinner, is as much under the law and curse as if Christ had not come into the world, and there had been no Mediator between God and man. He who believeth not in Christ, is not so united to him, and is not in him, as that his merit and righteousness, which consist in what he did and suffered to maintain and honor the law, may be properly imputed to him, or reckoned to his account; he is under condemnation, and the wrath of God and curse of his law are as much upon him as if there had been no Savior. (John iii. 18, 36.)

And believers in Christ, or true Christians, are as much under the law, as a rule, as ever they were; and under as great obligations to a perfect conformity to it as any others, or as they ever were. And every thing in them which is short of perfect holiness, or perfect obedience to this law, considered in its utmost strictness, is perfectly inexcusable, and as criminal in them as if they were not believers in Christ; yea, much more so, for the superior discerning, light, and advantages they have, and the peculiar favors and privileges bestowed on them, do vastly increase their obligations to perfect holiness, and so render every degree of opposition, or want of perfect conformity to the law of God, immensely more criminal than they are in others. The law, considered in its greatest strictness, as requiring absolute perfection, is as much a rule to them as ever, and is the only rule or law they are under; and Christ did not design to deliver them from obligations to perfect obedience to this law, but, as has just been observed, is the occasion of greatly increasing them by what he has done for them. Christ has, indeed, made atonement for all their sins against this law which they have committed, or ever shall commit; and so has delivered them from the curse of the law, being himself made a curse for them; so that they are, in this sense, "not under the law, but under grace." (Rom. vi. 15.) They are not under the curse of the law, nor exposed to the infinitely dreadful punishment threatened; but they are completely delivered from this by a free pardon. But this has not taken off their obligations to obey this law; so far from it, that it has greatly increased them. Jesus Christ is not disposed to bring the law down to them, or release them from obligations to obey it; but designs, and is engaged, to deliver them from all sin, and bring them to a perfect conformity to

this law, as that in which their redemption and happiness will very much consist.

Let us now consider why, and in what sense, the knowledge of this law of God is necessary in order to the knowledge of sin.

And here the matter is so plain that there is need of but little to be said in order to make it sufficiently evident. If this law is the rule of man's conduct, of all his exercises and behavior, so that he is sinful, or not, just in proportion as he conforms to this law, or does not, then he cannot possibly judge of his own character, and determine whether he is a sinner or not, if he is perfectly ignorant of this law; and he must be ignorant of his own sinfulness, however great a sinner he is, just in proportion to the degree of his ignorance of the law he is under. Sin is the transgression of the law; therefore, where there is no law, there is no sin; and he who has no idea, no apprehension or knowledge of law, has no idea of sin, and it is impossible he should; and every person's notion of sin will be according to his notion of the law. If he thinks God's law requires that which it does not, he will judge that to be sin which in truth is not so. If he thinks the law he is under does not require what it really does, he will look upon that to be no sin which in truth is so; and so far as he sees not the ground and reasonableness of the law, he will be ignorant of the crime or real sinfulness there is in transgressing it. If he is ignorant of the excellence, worthiness, and authority of the lawgiver, and so sees not the excellence and glory of the law, he must be blind to the true turpitude and odiousness of sin, and can have no true idea of it.

For the more clear illustration of this point, it may be observed, that there is a threefold knowledge of the law, and an answerable different knowledge of sin.

There is what may be called a speculative knowledge of the law, which is attended with an answerable knowledge of sin. Men may have, in a great measure, right speculations with respect to the law of God and sin. They may reason and judge right about the strictness, extent, and reasonableness of God's law, the obligation they are under to obedience, their total depravity, and destitution of conformity to this law, and the infinite evil or crime there is in all sin, etc., — I say, men may enter far into speculations on these things, and reason clearly and very well upon them, and yet their hearts not be at all affected with them. They may feel themselves so uninterested in the matter as to give themselves no trouble about it in this view, but live at ease, and, with the greatest carelessness and stupidity, run on in sin with greediness. The many sad examples of this render what is here asserted indisputable.

There is a further knowledge of the law of God, and so of sin, which unregenerate persons may have, by having their consciences awakened up to attend to these things in some measure as realities, and with particular application to themselves. They now find themselves greatly interested in this matter. They feel themselves condemned by the law, and under the curse of God, against whom they have always rebelled, and have such a view and sense of the greatness, majesty, and power of God, and the dreadfulness of his anger, and their constant exposedness to be cast into hell, as to fill them with sore distress, even to amazement and horror. And this becomes their great and only concern, by night and by day, how they shall escape the wrath that is to come.

But there is another and quite different kind of knowledge of God's law and of sin, which is peculiar to the regenerate. They discern and have a sense of heart of the superlative excellence and glory of the divine character, by which he is infinitely distinguished from all other beings, and feel the obligations they and all creatures are under to love him perfectly with all their hearts forever. They, therefore, see the reasonableness, extent, and excellence of the law of God in such a manner and degree as implies a hearty approbation and love of it, and say in their hearts, "The law is holy, just, and good." They hence see what sin is. It appears to them infinitely odious and ill deserving, as it is a contradiction to the divine character and law, and heartily hate and abhor it, as what justly deserves God's displeasure and wrath forever.

Whatever knowledge of the law and of sin the unregenerate have, it does not imply in it any true sight and sense of the amiableness and excellence of God's law, or of the real hatefulness of sin; for they do neither love the law nor hate sin, but, on the contrary, they approve of sin in their hearts, and love it, and heartily oppose and hate God's law; and as they are blind to this most important and essential article, they may be truly said not to have the knowledge of God, his law, or of sin. Therefore, the Scripture represents them as not knowing God and the things of the Spirit of God. (John iv. 8. 1 Cor. ii. 14.) The regenerate only have the true knowledge of the law of God and of sin; and it is in the light of God's holy law that they see sin to be what it is. They can, therefore, all say with St. Paul in our text, "I had not known sin but by the law."

I proceed to make some useful remarks and reflections, which the subject we have been attending to naturally suggests: —

I. Great mistakes and wrong notions about the law are very hurtful and fatal mistakes. They who have quite wrong

ideas of the law of God will have equally wrong ideas of their own character as sinners, and, consequently, wrong ideas of the character of the Mediator and the grace revealed in the gospel. The gospel has such respect to the law of God, and the latter is so much the reason and ground of the former, and so essential to the wisdom and glory of it, that it cannot be understood by him who is ignorant of the law; and, consequently, our idea and apprehension of the gospel will be erroneous and wrong just so far as we have wrong notions of God's law. The character of a Mediator is necessary, excellent, and glorious only in this view and on this supposition, that the law of God, which requires perfect persevering obedience, on pain of eternal damnation, is unchangeably right, just, excellent, and glorious, and, consequently, sin infinitely criminal and odious; for the most essential part of the character of the Mediator consists in his honoring this law, and making atonement for sin. He, therefore, who does not believe there is any such law, or does not view it in this light, and so does not see sin in its true demerit and hatefulness, cannot possibly understand the gospel, but must be blind to the true wisdom and glory of it.

This has been, and now is, the sad case of multitudes under the gospel. They hope and expect to be saved by Christ; they speak much of the grace of the gospel, and the wonderful mercy of God to sinners; but they at the same time are ignorant of the divine law, and never were reconciled to it as holy, just, and good; so never saw sin in its true odiousness and ill desert. Let such rise as high as they will in their admiration of gospel grace, and, though they are affected even to raptures, they are wholly ignorant of the true grace of God, of their need of a Mediator, and of the way of salvation by him. So important are the right notions of the law. He who fails here must be in darkness with respect to the whole system of religious truth; the true gospel will be hid from him; and to him Christ crucified will be nothing but a stumbling-block, and the most perfect foolishness. There are many who speak out and say, "We do not believe there is now any such law binding on men which requires perfect obedience on pain of eternal damnation. This law is wholly set aside by the gospel, and we never were under it, nor indeed would it be just in God to hold us to it. Christ — blessed be his name! — has introduced a more mild dispensation, so that we are now not under law, but under grace." But, pray, what grace is there in abolishing and freeing you from a law which you never could be justly under, and which, therefore, ought in justice to be set aside? And what need of a Mediator to die, to deliver you from this law and introduce a more mild dispensation?

Must there be so costly a sacrifice to induce the great Lawgiver to give up that which he could not justly insist upon, it being in itself unreasonable? But if it is in itself reasonable, being founded in the reason and nature of things, it cannot be given up and abolished on any consideration whatsoever. Surely such, however they may "desire to be teachers of the law, understand neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm." (1 Tim. i. 7.) When will such horrible jargon and blasphemy be banished from the Christian world? How far are such from knowing their own character as sinners, and the true grace of the gospel whereby the sinner is saved!

And suffer me to add here, a hearty submission to, and acquiescence and delight in, the law of God, rightly understood, and so a true hatred of sin, must take place in order to any degree of true approbation of the gospel and faith and trust in Christ. For so far as we are from approving of the law of God in our hearts, and a sense of the hatefulness and ill desert of sin, just so far shall we always be from being pleased with the atonement of Christ, rightly understood, in which the law is set up and honored as most excellent and glorious, and sin is condemned in the highest possible degree, and its infinite odiousness and ill desert set in the most clear and striking light imaginable. Indeed, this approbation and sense of heart is implied in a true idea and knowledge of the law in its excellence and glory, and of sin in its true odiousness and ill desert; for the very idea of beauty and excellence consists in a sense of heart, and is itself a pleasedness with that beauty and delight in it; and there can be no distinction between seeing the true hatefulness of an object and hating it.*

Hence it appears of great importance that the law should be preached up, and kept in view, as this is absolutely necessary in order to give a right idea of the gospel. Many public teachers and professed preachers of the gospel grossly fail

* Thus evident is it that the sinner who comes to Christ for salvation comes as a true penitent, and that repentance, which most essentially consists in a sense of heart of the true odiousness and ill desert of sin, is not only implied in faith in Christ, but is necessary in order to this faith; and the former takes place before the latter, as there must be the knowledge and approbation of the divine character and law, and a sight and sense of the ill desert of sin, before there can be any true knowledge of the Mediator and faith in him. Thus it is only the humble, contrite, broken-hearted penitent who is revived and comforted by Christ, as none but such ever did, or ever will, know his true character, or are prepared to receive with approbation and joy the good news he proclaims. This is so plain and demonstrable that it may be reasonably concluded that many who have objected against the notion that repentance towards God is antecedent to faith in Christ, and before it, as being heretical and absurd, have done it through some misunderstanding of the matter.

There are those who zealously contend that a sight and belief of the grace of God through Christ, and a view of God as reconciled to the sinner by him,

here. They never, in all they say, bring the law of God into view, but always keep it out of sight. And it is not uncommon for them to say many things which are directly, or, in fair construction, in opposition to God's law, rightly understood. They who are so unhappy as to sit under such teachers never will have the true knowledge of sin, or understand the gospel of Christ, if they learn no more than what they are taught by them. Whatever they may say in favor of the gospel, and however much they may seem to magnify the grace of God, using many high-sounding phrases and pathetic expressions, they are, in truth, words without a meaning, and convey no proper idea of the true grace of God; and the real gospel of Christ is overlooked and neglected. It is impossible there should be any solid superstructure on the sandy foundation on which they build.*

II. The foundation of all the great and hurtful errors, with respect to the gospel, which take place in the Christian world, is ignorance of God's law, and mistakes about it. If all were agreed and right in their sentiments about the law of God, and would be consistent with themselves, they would soon be agreed in all the important truths of Christianity, and an end would be put to most of our disputes about the doctrines of the gospel. This remark may be illustrated by instancing a few particulars.

If all men commence moral agents under this law, which requires perfect, persevering obedience, on pain of eternal destruction, and all do certainly and infallibly transgress this law as soon as they become moral agents, and fall under the curse of it, — so are eternally undone, unless they are delivered by undeserved sovereign grace, and all the children of Adam have been, are, or will be, in this state, — then all came into the world in as miserable a state and condition, and their existence is as infallibly connected with eternal ruin, as if they had fallen in

is the first and only thing that begets love to God and his law, and repentance of sin, and that it is impossible that the sinner should be reconciled to God and the divine law in any other view. I leave the attentive reader to observe and reflect upon the absurdity of such a notion. It is certain to a demonstration that they who are not heartily reconciled to God and his law, and do not hate sin and abhor themselves for it, do not know, and are not reconciled, to the grace of God through Christ. Nor can they attain to the latter if not first brought to the former, but will remain eternal enemies to both. They, therefore, who have never been reconciled to God and his holy law in any other way but by first seeing and believing in the grace of God through Christ, are yet ignorant of the true grace of God, and enemies to it. And all their love to Christ, and supposed reconciliation to God — all their repentance, religious affections, and rapturous admiration of the love and grace of God is nothing but mere enthusiastic delusion, bottomed on that selfishness which is perfect enmity against God.

* The reader may find this point more fully illustrated in Bellamy's "Essay on the Nature and Glory of the Gospel," especially in the first five sections.

Adam.* And the easiest, most natural, if not the only way to account for this event, viz., the unfailing sin and total ruin of all Adam's posterity, is, that it takes place in consequence of the first apostasy, by virtue of a holy and wise constitution, which connects the sin and ruin of all Adam's children with the rebellion of their first father, he being, in this, considered as their moral head and representative. I am confident every man will readily see that this is plainly the Bible account of the matter who is fully sensible of the state in which all mankind are by nature considered as under this law. And this is, I think, confirmed by fact and universal experience. Where can the person be found who has right and consistent notions of the divine law, agreeably to the representation that has now been given of it, who is not full in the belief of the doctrine of original sin? And why should he not believe it? What will he get by opposing this doctrine? All the children of Adam are as much and as infallibly undone as if their sin and misery came by virtue of their connection with the first sinner. And, by denying the doctrine of original sin, he is left without any satisfactory way of accounting for the universal sin and ruin of mankind, and brings on himself the difficult task of explaining away the most easy and natural meaning of these passages of Scripture which give a plain account of this matter.

And they who attend to and believe the nature, spirituality, and extent of the divine law, will not only be convinced that mankind are all sinners, and so in an undone state by nature, but that they are also greatly and totally corrupt, being wholly without any true conformity to the law of God, and altogether under the power of strong inclinations directly contrary to it. When the law comes, it is received and understood in its true import; the sinfulness of mankind revives and comes into view, and they appear wholly dead in trespasses and sins.

The doctrine of justification by faith in Christ, without the deeds of the law, or the sinner's being pardoned and received to favor, not on the account of any virtue or goodness of his own, but wholly out of respect to the merit and worthiness of Christ, to which he is entitled by faith, or his union to Christ,—this doctrine, I say, is established by right notions of the law; so that they who are of the same sentiments with respect to the latter will agree in the former. If the sinner is under a law which considers the least sin as an infinite crime, and, therefore, deserving an eternal punishment, then it is

* This matter is very particularly considered and set in a clear light by Edwards, on Original Sin, Part I. chap. i. sects. 1, 2, 3.

impossible for him who is guilty of sin to have any thing of his own to offer to God that shall recommend him in the least degree; for he, being infinitely guilty and odious, whatever virtue and holiness he may afterwards have, it can in no degree countervail his guilt, or be reckoned in his favor, any more than if he had no holiness at all. If, therefore, he has pardon and favor, it must be wholly on account of the merit and worthiness of Christ, which is reckoned to his account, or imputed to him, in consequence of his union to Christ by faith. This doctrine has been greatly opposed in the Christian world, and this opposition has been wholly grounded on ignorance and mistakes with respect to the law of God. Therefore, St. Paul, when he undertook to establish this truth, "that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law," and confute the opposers of it, in his epistles to the churches at Rome and Galatia, does it chiefly by bringing this law into view.*

Again: they who understand the law of God, and are reconciled to it, must, of consequence, be reconciled to the doctrine of God's decrees, as they respect the eternal state of mankind. For if all men are naturally under a constitution and law,

* There are some who loudly proclaim against the notion of the sinner's exercising any virtue or real holiness antecedent to his justification, and in order to it, as this seems to them to be inconsistent with mere free grace, in the pardon and justification of a sinner, and lays a foundation for his boasting; so must be pleasing to his native pride, which is certainly most contrary to the gospel, as that is suited, in the highest degree, to exalt free grace and humble man. They, therefore, zealously contend that the faith which justifies has no moral goodness in it, and that the sinner is justified antecedent to any holy exercises of heart; and represent those who hold that the sinner must have a new heart, even a penitent, humble heart, a heart to love God and his law, antecedent to his pardon and justification, and in order to it, as all this is implied in that faith by which the sinner is justified, — they represent such, I say, as legalists, flattering the pride of man, and enemies to the true grace of God.

It will be observed by the careful reader that I have here placed the doctrine of the justification of a sinner by free grace, through faith, in a different light, and on a different footing, from these divines, viz., on the infinite evil of sin, grounded on the worthiness and authority of God, which is expressed in the divine law. In this view the sinner, he who has once broken the law of God, is so infinitely odious and ill deserving, that whatever virtue he exercises, either before or after he has sinned, it can be of no account or avail to recommend him in the least degree, or be reckoned in his favor any more than if he was wholly without any goodness. He is still, in himself considered, as guilty and unworthy, and as much under the curse of the divine law; therefore, is just as ungodly in the view of law, which is God's view and judgment of the matter, and is according to truth, and stands in as much need of free grace as if he was wholly without any holiness, and is as much without all ground of boasting as any sinner can be. The plain reason of this is, his sin and guilt are infinite, and his virtue finite. Therefore, the latter cannot in the least degree counterbalance the former; and is of no more avail, and has no more influence to remove his guilt and take off the curse, than nothing at all. That virtue which, in a creature who has no sin, would be acceptable and recommend him to the favor of God, is, in the sinner, of no avail to this, and renders him no more acceptable than if he was wholly without it; because it is all swallowed

according to which they are infinitely guilty and ill deserving, so that they may most justly be cast into eternal destruction, and if any are saved it must be by mere undeserved sovereign grace, then they are in the hands of a sovereign God, who has a right to determine whether he will save any of them; and if any, who he will save, and who he will leave to perish in their sin and ill desert. If all are justly under the curse, God may justly leave whom he will to perish. His bestowing undeserved sovereign mercy on some lays him under no obligation to others. And it belongs to him to order this matter, and make the distinction, and dispose of his undeserved, forfeited favors as he pleases. If God neither is, nor can be, under any obligation to sinners, but may justly cast them all into hell forever, all will readily grant he has a right to do what he will with his own, and give his grace to whom he will, while he withholds it from others. Therefore, if any one objects against the decrees of God, in his sovereignly determining the eternal state of the children of men, and in appointing him in particular to destruction, his objection is wholly grounded on a supposition that he is not justly treated, but God is hard and cruel in thus disposing of him, and that he has some right and claim to something better. Whenever he can be brought to give up this point,

up and lost in his infinite guilt and odiousness, being infinitely outweighed by that, so that, in connection and in comparison with it, it has no weight, and can be of no account: all its influences are perfectly lost and destroyed by his sin.

And on this ground only can the doctrine of justification and salvation by free grace, through faith, without works, be established and vindicated, and all boasting be wholly and forever excluded, and the sinner effectually humbled. For if the virtue of a sinner does in any degree recommend him to God, so that he, by reason of this, stands in less need of free grace than if he had none, then, whenever he becomes virtuous, whether before justification or after, he has some ground of boasting, and has a worthiness of his own to recommend him to the divine favor and rewards, so has less need of the merit and righteousness of Christ the more virtuous he is. Therefore the Christian, who all acknowledge has some virtue, hath whereof to glory; has something of his own to recommend him to God; and the more he increases in holiness, the less need he has of the merit of Christ, and the less indebted he is to free grace for salvation.

I have often wondered that they who make the objection above do not see where the principle they go upon will lead them, if followed in its genuine consequences. If the virtue of a sinner does in any degree recommend him to favor, and render him more worthy of it, or less ill deserving, — which is the maxim they found their objections upon, — then sin is not an infinite evil, so does not deserve an infinite punishment. And then there is no need of an infinite atonement and infinitely meritorious righteousness, in order to the pardon and salvation of sinners, so no need that the Mediator should be a divine person; or, rather, no need of any Mediator at all: so we are soon landed in Deism. Nor can we stop here; for the denial of the infinite evil of sin is, in effect, a denial of the existence of the infinitely perfect and glorious God, and will therefore carry those that follow it in its true consequences into all the absurdities and horrors of atheism itself.

Thus important is the doctrine of the infinite evil of sin. To give this up,

and feel he deserves eternal destruction, all his objections against the divine decrees will subside. And this will be the case whenever he submits to the law of God, as holy, just, and good. Nothing, therefore, is wanting, in order to silence all clamor against the doctrine of God's decrees, but to have the law of God understood, so as to give a true knowledge and conviction of sin. So far as this takes place every mouth will be stopped, God will be justified, and righteousness ascribed unto him, while he has mercy on whom he will have mercy, and leaves whom he will in their rebellion and impenitence, to sink down to eternal ruin.

III. We hence learn why the Mosaic dispensation was so contrived in the whole of it as to exhibit the law of God in a most clear and striking light.

It is said, "The law was given by Moses; but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." (John i. 17.) Though gospel grace, or the way of salvation through a Mediator, was revealed by Moses, yet this was done in a dark and faint manner, by types and shadows; the law in all its strictness and glory, as a covenant of works, was held foremost and exhibited in the clearest light, and the whole of the revelation given by Moses was, on design, calculated to manifest what God's law

is to give up Christianity. And if it is admitted, the objection above mentioned falls to the ground. The necessity of the sinner's exercising virtue antecedent to his justification, and in order to it, is not because he needs any worthiness of his own, or can have any, but because by this alone can his heart be so united to the Mediator as to be the proper ground of his being looked upon and treated as so far *one* with him, as that his merit and righteousness may be properly imputed to him, or reckoned in his favor, so as to avail for his pardon and justification.

It is, perhaps, worthy to be particularly observed here, that the sinner's virtuous exercises, which are necessary in order to his justification, consist summarily in a sense of his own infinite unworthiness and ill desert in God's sight, grounded on a conviction and sense of heart of the excellence and worthiness of the divine character and law, and of his need of the most free, sovereign, and infinite grace, in order to his pardon and salvation; and a real willingness to be thus beholden to free grace, and receive all he wants from God as from a sovereign benefactor, being in himself infinitely miserable, vile, and ill deserving.

Such feelings as these, surely, have no tendency to obscure the grace of God, or make the sinner senseless of it, and dispose him to exalt and trust in himself; for they consist in directly the contrary, even in the sinner's acknowledging and exacting divine grace and abasing himself. And the more fully the sinner comes into such views and exercises, the more is God's grace honored and exalted by him, at the greater distance is he set from pride and boasting, and the more is he humbled. The gospel is contrived and planned to abase man, and exalt and honor free and sovereign grace. Therefore, whenever the sinner understands it, and submits to the truth contained in it, and has his heart formed, and exercises himself according to them, he is effectually humbled, and free grace is by him exalted. And it is no matter how soon he comes to these views and exercises; for he never will be humbled and disposed to trust in and exalt free grace till he dies. And if his coming to these exercises before he is justified is inconsistent with free grace in his salvation, so is his ever exercising virtue as long as he exists.

is, and was, therefore, given in the form of a covenant of works, law being most visible and the outward form of the whole, and what of gospel grace was revealed was couched, and as it were hid, under this cover of law, or a covenant of works. On this account it may be called a legal dispensation; and in this view I suppose it is that St. Paul, in his epistles, so constantly calls this revelation and the Mosaic dispensation *the law*.

It was of great importance and necessary that the law of God should be thus revealed, in order to prepare the way for a more clear and full revelation of gospel grace which was made by Jesus Christ. Yea, the grace of the gospel could not be revealed in all its greatness and glory in any other way. The law must be first extant in all its strictness, extent, and glory, and must be well understood, in order to men's knowing their own character as sinners, and understanding and embracing the way of salvation by grace through a Mediator.

IV. What has been said on this subject may help all who are inquiring to determine whether their religion is of the right kind or not.

Has it had its foundation in the knowledge of God's law? Has this given you the knowledge and conviction of your own sinfulness, and of the dreadful state you are in as a sinner? Persons may have a great deal of solicitude about their souls and their eternal state, and have a great deal of religion, such as it is, and yet be quite ignorant of the law of God, and so have no true conviction of sin. This seems to have been the case with the young man who came to Christ with this important question, "What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" He appeared to be greatly engaged about his eternal interest, but at the same time manifested himself to be quite ignorant of the law of God, and so of his own true character.

Many have appeared to be in great terrors and distress about their souls and a future state, for a time, who have had no true conviction of sin by the law. They are not able to give any distinct and intelligible account of the ground of their concern. There have been many of this sort in times of great and general awakening and solemn attention to the things of religion; they, by hearing terrifying preaching, or seeing others in great distress about their souls, or from some other cause, are themselves terrified with fears they shall go to hell; but if they are examined, they cannot give a rational account about the matter, and all their apprehensions about sin and hell seem to be confused and imaginary. After they have continued in these terrors for a while they receive light and comfort, as they call

it; and this is as confused and imaginary as their preceding terrors were. It is all without any true knowledge of the law, sin, the character of the Mediator, and the way of salvation by him. No wonder if the religion which has such a foundation and beginning issues in mad enthusiasm, or a careless, immoral life, or both.

But let us proceed in the inquiry.

Has the law come, and, in the light of this, have you seen your own character, and been convinced of sin? Have you been convinced that you was nothing but sin, guilt, and vileness? that you are by nature totally corrupt, and wholly without any good thing? All who have the knowledge of God's law fall under this conviction; and they who never see themselves in this light may depend upon it, that they have not been truly convinced of sin, and are ignorant of themselves in a degree which is inconsistent with true religion.

Have you been brought to see and feel yourselves wholly to blame for every thing in you that is not perfectly conformed to God's law, or for every thing short of perfect holiness — that you have no excuse for not obeying God's law perfectly? And is it become easy and natural for you to take all the blame to yourselves? Many appear not to be brought to this, and so not to have the true knowledge of their sinfulness. They say, "We can do nothing of ourselves. We are poor, weak, impotent creatures, and can do nothing any further than God assists by his Spirit." And though this is in a sense true, yet they evidently speak of this as some excuse to them for not being perfectly holy, or not living in a high degree of the exercise of faith and holiness. Such have not the true knowledge of God's law, and have not been convinced of sin, as God's people are. Man is under no inability to come up to all that God's law requires which, in any degree, abates his obligation to perfect holiness, or affords the least excuse for the want of it. The true Christian takes all the blame to himself for every thing in him that is contrary to God's law, or that is short of perfect holiness. He sees and owns his obligation to be perfectly holy, and condemns and takes shame to himself before God constantly for every thing wherein he falls short of coming up to this most perfect and excellent rule; for he always considers this law as the only rule of his duty.

Has the law of God slain you, so that you have found it to be unto death? Have you found yourselves justly under the curse of this law, deserving eternal damnation? Has it killed all your hopes of recommending yourselves to God in the least degree by any of your own virtue and doings, and cured

you of all such attempts? Thus Paul says it was with him. "I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." Thus it is with every true Christian.

Do you like the law of God, considered in all its strictness and whole extent, and love it, and delight in it as holy, just, and good? (Rom. vii. 12, 22.) Can you say, with the Psalmist, "O, how love I thy law! — it is my meditation all the day?" (Ps. cxix. 97.) This is the character of every good man; "his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night." (Ps. i. 2.) Are you disposed and ready to justify God in making and maintaining such a law in the manner he does? Do you revere, love, and honor the character of the Deity hereby exhibited to your view? And does the love to this law that Christ hath manifested, and his disposition and zeal to maintain and honor it, though it cost him his life, greatly recommend him to your esteem and love? It was this that recommended him to the Father; as it is written of him, "Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." (Heb. i. 9.) And it is this that recommends him to every true Christian. In this his excellency chiefly consists; and in this consist his merit and righteousness, in which the believer trusts for pardon and acceptance with God. How evident and certain is it, then, that he who does not understand and love the law of God does not see Christ's excellency, nor know wherein his worthiness and righteousness consist, so does not love him nor trust in him!

Do you long for, seek, and strive after conformity to this law? Is this the rule you keep in view as the measure of all your exercises and conduct, looking upon yourselves as sinful so far as you are not conformed to this most perfect rule in heart and life, not desiring the law should be abated in its strictness or brought down to you in the least degree, but desiring yourselves to attain to that perfect holiness which it requires, as an essential part of that salvation you trust in Christ for, and knowing and feeling that you cannot be perfectly happy in any other way, or in any attainment short of this? This is most certainly true of every real Christian. Such not only love the law of God, and seek conformity to it as the only rule of their duty, but as their happiness; and the heaven they are seeking for consists chiefly in this, in their view.

Do you place all your religious attainments in conformity and obedience to this law? Do the exercises of your religion

consist in love to God and your neighbor, and in those things which are implied in this and result from it? By this you may be helped to determine what is the nature of your religion. There are many, it is to be feared, whose religion will appear to be not of the right kind, if impartially tried by this rule. It consists either in self-love or selfishness; this being the spring of all their exercises and actions, which is as contrary to the love of God and our neighbor as darkness is to light, or as sin is to holiness; or it consists wholly in some extraordinary impulses and agitations of mind, or a set of religious exercises and experiences, as they call them; in great discoveries and high flights of affection, joy, etc., which, when examined, appear to have nothing of love to God or to man in them, so have no real conformity to God's law, or any tendency to it. When a person's religious exercises and experiences appear to be of this kind, especially when this is apparent in the fruit, they not leading to, and issuing in, conformity to the law of God in life and conversation, we may depend upon it his religion is all wrong.

Do you grow in a sense of your own sinfulness? This is always the case with true Christians, who have the knowledge of sin by the law. As they increase in a discerning and sense of the excellence and glory of the divine character and law, they see more and more of their own true character as sinners; and are hence led to see more of the depth, strength, and extent of wickedness in their hearts, as it discovers itself in its various actings. They are constantly making progress in discoveries of this kind, and growing in a sense of the sinfulness of every sin — see more and more of its infinite odiousness and ill desert. There are many professing Christians who talk and act as if they thought they had done with conviction of sin as soon as they became Christians. All the conviction of sin they have any notion of is something which preceded their supposed conversion; and since that they have had very little sense of sin or concern about their own sinfulness. It is not so with the true Christian. When he first commenced a Christian, he began to see his own sinfulness in a true light, and all that went before was a very deficient, partial conviction, and is nothing compared with this. And conviction of sin has attended and kept pace with all his religious exercises and attainments. Therefore, while the hypocrite, or the professor who is not truly converted, is bloated, lifted up, and proud, and grows in a high esteem of his own excellence and attainments, being ignorant of his own true character, the real Christian, as he makes advances in the knowledge of

God and his law, is constantly growing less, more mean, odious, and ill deserving in his own eyes, and sinking down, in a growing sense of his own infinite vileness and ill desert; viewing himself as all over defiled and abominable; condemning, abasing, and abhorring himself, and repenting in dust and ashes.

V. This may serve as matter of awakening and warning to impenitent, Christless sinners.

The strictness and extent, the importance, unchangeable excellence and glory of the law you are under, and which you have broken, and the infinite dreadfulness of the punishment included in the curse of it, conspire to admonish you of the sad and dreadful case you are in. How many and how great must your sins be! You have hitherto done nothing but transgress this law in all your exercises and conduct. The number of your sins is so great, it exceeds all account. And how amazingly aggravated are all your sins, which have been committed under such light and the offers of the most wonderful mercy! What amazing wrath and vengeance hang over your heads continually! What astonishing aggravated damnation are you constantly exposed to fall into! And consider the impossibility of your escaping, in the way in which you are. The law of God will not, cannot, be set aside; it must have its course, though you and thousands more perish most dreadfully forever.

O, be entreated to consider yourselves, and take warning, and flee from the wrath to come. There is but *one* possible way of escape — even flying to Jesus Christ, the Mediator, who has been made a curse, that he might deliver sinners from it who fly to him for refuge. He now, as with open arms, invites you to come and put your trust in him for pardon and salvation. If you will hearken to him, he shall be made of God unto you wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. (1 Cor. i. 30.) He will be "as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest." (Isa. xxxii. 2.) Then may you say with confidence and joy, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength;" for in the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory. (Isa. xlv. 24, 25.)

VI. Let us all be hence excited to attend to and study the law of God with application to ourselves.

This is the law which is written on the heart of every Christian, in the knowledge and view of which he exercises himself in Christian holiness. This is the rule of his life, and in the light of this he sees his own natural face, and is humbled, and exercises faith in Christ and every Christian grace. And

so far as the law of God is overlooked and neglected, just so far is all true Christianity overlooked and lost. Let us, then, carefully and constantly look into this perfect law of liberty, and continue therein. If in this way we are not forgetful hearers of the word, but doers of the work, we shall be blessed in our deeds. (Jam. i. 25.)

SERMON II.

THE CAUSE, NATURE, AND MEANS OF REGENERATION.

Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. — John i. 13.

In the words preceding these, we are told in what way persons become the sons of God, viz., by receiving Christ, or believing on his name. It is by virtue of their union of heart to Christ the eternal Son of God, which consists in cleaving to him and trusting in him, in the character of Mediator between God and man, that they are received into the relation of sons, and made heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ.

In the text we are told by whom they who thus become the sons of God are brought into this state of union to Jesus Christ and made to exist in this relation, or who is the cause or author of their thus receiving Christ or believing in him, by which they become the sons of God, which is here called *a being born*. When a child is born into the world, there is some cause of this production, this living, perfect child; so, when any person becomes a new creature, and in a sense enters into a new world, even into the kingdom of God, by believing on the name of Jesus Christ, there is some agent which is the cause of this.

"God hath made of one blood all nations of men," (Acts. xvii. 26;) that is, he hath produced all nations by natural descent from one man. The evangelist here tells us that the birth he speaks of is quite a different thing from this; it is not produced by natural generation or descent from father to son; it does not thus run in the blood, and is not transmitted from generation to generation in this way. Men do not become the sons of God, they are not regenerated, and do not become believers in Christ by any thing derived from their natural parents, by their descent from them, and near relation to them, by which the blood of the parents does, as it were, run in their veins. The piety or holiness of the parents has no influence

or hand in this production, as a cause; it does nothing towards regenerating, or producing faith in the child. The child of the most holy parent is by nature as corrupt and as far from this birth, and always will be so, without some other cause or influence, as are the children of the ungodly.

In this assertion there seems to be a particular design to contradict and oppose a then prevailing notion among the Jews — that they were the sons of God by blood, as they were the children of Abraham. Of this they boast to our Savior, and say that they were Abraham's seed, and, therefore, that God was their father; as if by being the children of Abraham they were the sons of God. (John viii. 33, 41. Rom. viii. 1–9. Gal. v. 17.) In opposition to this notion of theirs, John Baptist says to them, "Begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father; for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." (Luke iii. 8. 1 Cor. ii. 14, 15.)

Nor of the will of the flesh. By flesh is meant man in his natural, corrupt state, as he is antecedent to regeneration. This is the meaning of *flesh* as it is used in many places in Holy Scripture; which is evident, among other things, by its being frequently put in opposition to the Spirit; and to be in the flesh, and to walk after the flesh, or to be carnal, is spoken of as directly opposite to being spiritual, having the spirit of Christ, and walking after the Spirit, and as if there was no medium between them. (John iii. 1, 6.) What is here asserted then is, that persons are not regenerated by any inclinations, choice, or exertions of their own, while they were in a state of unregeneracy. They do not, by the exercise of their own wills, or by their endeavors, do any thing towards their being born again; nor do they coöperate in the least degree with the efficient cause. So far from this, that all their inclinations, and every act of will and exertion of theirs, is in direct opposition to it, for the flesh always lusteth against the Spirit.

It is, indeed, as great an absurdity as can be thought of, to suppose that the corrupt, vicious heart does any thing towards its becoming holy, or exercises any will or choice that has the least tendency to it; as absurd as to suppose that the exercise of perfect selfishness has a tendency to produce benevolence, or that the heart is made better and becomes holy by the constant exercise of lust and wickedness. For all the exercises and volitions of the corrupt, unregenerate heart are certainly the exercises of sin. It was, nevertheless, of importance that this should be particularly observed by the evangelist, when treating of this matter; seeing, however plain it is, and though the contrary is so very absurd, men are ready to imagine they

may be born again by the will of the flesh, or, at least, that by the exertions of their own wills and endeavors they may do something towards it. In this delusion I suppose all men naturally are, and that no man heartily and really gives up this point until he is taught of God. And multitudes of professing Christians do persist in expressly opposing what is here asserted all their days. But of this more will be said, before I have done.

Nor of the will of man; that is, not by the power and influence of others. No one person is born again by the will and endeavors of others. However pious and wise they are, and how much soever they exert themselves to bring others to holiness, they do in no degree produce the effect. If all the angels and saints in heaven and all the godly on earth should join their wills and endeavors, and unitedly exert all their powers to regenerate one sinner, they could not effect it; yea, could do nothing towards it. It is an effect infinitely beyond the reach of finite wisdom and power. "Paul planted, and Apollos watered; but God giveth the increase. So, then, neither he that planteth is any thing, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase." (1 Cor. iii. 6, 7.)

St. John, having declared what is not the cause of the new birth, proceeds to say in one word what it is — *but of God.* God is the only efficacious agent or efficient cause in this affair. It is all to be wholly ascribed to him.

What I propose now is, particularly to inquire into this change here spoken of and called *a being born;* to consider the nature of it, and wherein it consists, and especially how, and in what sense, God is the author of it.

And, for the more distinct and clear treating this matter, I would observe, that in this change, taken in its full extent, there is the agency both of God, the cause and author of it, and of man, who is the subject of the change. God, by his Spirit, is the efficient cause; by his agency and influence the change is produced. Man's agency in the affair is in consequence of the divine agency and influence, and is an effect and fruit of it, and consists in those views and exercises of heart in which the regenerate repent, turn to God, believe on Jesus Christ, which is comprised in true Christian holiness, or the new creature. The divine agency and operation, which is first, and lays the foundation for all right views and exercises in the person who is the subject, is called by divines *regeneration.* The holy views and exercises of the subject, in which he receives Christ, or believes on his name, is called *conversion,* and sometimes *active conversion,* to distinguish it from that

previous operation and change wrought by the Spirit of God, in which God is the only agent, and man, the subject, does not act, but is perfectly passive.

This subject, I conceive, cannot be properly illustrated, and so as to be well understood, without a distinct and particular attention to each of these in their nature, dependence, and connection. This is, therefore, what I would now attempt.

First, then, let us consider the divine agency, the work of the Spirit of God, by which persons are regenerated or born of God, and which lays the only foundation for conversion or holy exercises in the subject.

Concerning this the following things may be observed: —

I. The only ground and reason of regeneration, or of the necessity of the regenerating influences of the Spirit of God, in order to men's converting and embracing the gospel, is the total depravity and corruption of the heart of man in his natural, fallen state.

By total corruption of the heart, I mean its being wholly without any degree of right disposition or principles that should be a foundation for holy exercises, but altogether under the dominion of a contrary disposition and principle; so that there is no right exercise of heart, but every notion or act of the will is wrong, corrupt, and sinful. If this was not the case with man, there would be no need of his beginning a new kind of life, of his being created anew, and made quite a new creature, by having a new principle implanted in order to his salvation; there would be no necessity of that work of regeneration of which I am now speaking in order to man's believing on Jesus Christ. Was not man wholly corrupt, he would naturally, as I may say, believe on Christ, without any new, special operation on his heart by the Spirit of God, and would need nothing but to have the disposition and principles which are naturally in his heart strengthened and increased by exercise, in order to his salvation. But if this is really the case with man, — if he is so far sunk into corruption that he has not naturally the least degree of disposition to that which is good, but his heart is wholly and perfectly opposite to it, — then no possible means and external applications will be sufficient to bring him to the least degree of right disposition and exercise, or do any thing towards it. This can be effected only by the power and Spirit of God, which at first created all things out of nothing, and implanted a right disposition in man when he was first made. It is as absurd to suppose that in this case right disposition and exercises do take place in the heart without the all-creating influence of

the Spirit of God, as it is to suppose that the whole world came into existence without creating power, or from no cause at all.*

Therefore, since the ground of the necessity of the regenerating influences of the Spirit of God is the perfect corruption and wickedness of the heart of man, he is wholly to blame for being and continuing unregenerate, or for that in which unregeneracy consists. If mankind are under any law at all, and are in the least to blame for any thing, they are required to love God with all their hearts, and their neighbor as themselves; and are wholly to blame for every degree in which they come short of this, for every defect in their hearts of this kind, and for every degree of contrary disposition. Therefore, to be perfectly indisposed to that which God's law requires,

* As the doctrine of regeneration, as I am about to explain it, has its foundation in the total depravity and corruption of man in his fallen, unrenewed state, and seeing many things that will be said suppose this to be a truth, it may be proper in a marginal note to produce some of the evidence there is of this, which was omitted in the sermon, as time would not allow of a particular attention to it.

As true holiness consists summarily in disinterested, kind affection to other beings, God and the creature, or in true love and benevolence to being in general, so sinfulness or corruption of heart summarily consists in the want of benevolence, and that which is directly opposite to this, to wit, selfishness, or, as it is sometimes called, *self-love;* by which a person regards and seeks his own private, separate interest, without any true disinterested regard to others. This selfishness is the root and essence of every thing sinful and wrong in the heart; therefore, to be wholly without disinterested affection or benevolence to others, and perfectly selfish, or altogether under the government of self-love, in every exercise and action, is to be wholly corrupt.

According to this state of the case, it appears that many who oppose the doctrine of the total depravity of man, and insist that all men are virtuous in some degree, do, at the same time, really grant the thing they seem to oppose, and even all they contend for whom they mean to confute, for they allow that self-love is the highest principle from which men naturally act; and all the virtue they contend for consists in selfishness, and is, therefore, nothing but sin. So that, at bottom, the whole dispute is about the nature of virtue or holiness, and in what it consists; and this state of the case will go a great way in determining the question, whether men are by nature wholly corrupt or not. For every one who is much acquainted with mankind, and is a careful observer, will find abundance of evidence that they are at least — the most of them — wholly selfish in their views and conduct.

But I have room only to hint these things here. If the reader is desirous to go into a more particular and thorough examination of this matter, I recommend to him a "Dissertation on the Nature of True Virtue," by the late President Edwards.

There is, in itself, no more absurdity or difficulty in supposing that man is wholly corrupt, than that he is corrupt in any degree. If his heart may be at all depraved, even in the least degree, it may as well, and as consistent with the reason and nature of things, be wholly depraved, and yet man be a perfectly free agent, and as much the subject of exhortations and commands, and of blame for every thing wrong and corrupt in him, as if his corruption was less in degree. This is so plain at first thought, that I think it needless to enter into a particular proof of it. I mention this here, however, because many have seemed to suppose that the doctrine of man's total depravity is inconsistent with his

and wholly inclined to that which is contrary to it, is altogether and most perfectly inexcusable, and man is wholly to blame for all this, and criminal in proportion to the degree in which it takes place, if there is any such thing as criminalness or blame in the universe. I desire this may be particularly observed and borne in mind through all the following discourse; for many, I perceive, are apt to make a mistake here, by which this matter is often set in a wrong and most absurd light. It is common for persons who believe they must be born again in order to be saved to think themselves not at all to blame that their hearts are not holy, or for that in which their unregeneracy consists; "for," say they, "we cannot change our own hearts; this is the work of God." And it is has been common to represent man's depravity and moral impotency in such a

being a free moral agent, and wholly to blame for not being perfectly holy, or not coming up to all that God's law requires, and have opposed the doctrine on this supposition. But how men of any thought and attention should go into such a mistake is really surprising. If any one will prove that total depravity is inconsistent with liberty, or to blame for not being perfectly holy, it may be also proved that every degree of depravity takes away just such a degree of liberty, and is, so far as it takes place, perfectly excusable and inconsistent with blame; and, consequently, that there is no such thing as crime or blameworthiness in nature, it being in itself a contradiction; and that a man cannot be reasonably commanded or exhorted to do that which he is not at the same time willing to do.

Though there are many things which appear in fact and experience which render it probable, and even put it beyond all reasonable doubt, that all men are by nature wholly corrupt, yet the certain evidence and proof of this is only in divine revelation; therefore, omitting every other probable argument, I shall consider what evidence we have of this in the Holy Scriptures. This may be done by the following observations: —

1. The Scripture teaches us that all holiness, even every degree of it, is from God, as the Author of it; that it is the effect and gift of his grace, and produced in man by his Spirit. It hence follows that man has naturally no degree of that which is right and good in his heart, but is wholly corrupt.

All the promises and predictions in the Bible of virtue and holiness, as what shall take place among men, and which God will cause to take place, and all the prayers put up to God for holiness, and acknowledgments and praises given to God for every degree of right, disposition, and exercise, are so many acknowledgments and declarations that all virtue and goodness in man is from God, and that men left to themselves, and as they naturally are, are wholly without it. It seems needless to refer to particular passages of this kind; the Bible is full of them, from beginning to end. In the Holy Scriptures, God is every where represented as much the Author of all virtue in men as of anything whatsoever; and this is constantly spoken of as his free and gracious gift to man. The undeniable consequence from this is, that man is naturally wholly without it. But, not to dwell on this, I proceed to say, —

There are many passages of Scripture which expressly ascribe all moral good that is in man to God, as the Author and Giver of it, whenever it takes place, as something more than what is natural to man. I shall here only mention a few of this kind. God speaks of himself as causing men to walk in his ways (i. e., to exercise and practise holiness) by subduing and taking away a rebellious temper, and giving them a new and opposite disposition, and putting his Spirit in them. "A new heart will I give you, and a new Spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you

light as to be inconsistent with his being directly to blame for not being holy, or not believing on Christ, etc.; and, consequently, they have represented the whole duty of the unregenerate to consist in those endeavors and doings which are antecedent to regeneration, and do not imply any real holiness or conformity to the law of God.

The absurdity of this appears so clearly, even in stating the matter, that it seems needless further to expose it. This is to turn the tables indeed, and to make man's duty wholly to lie not in obedience to God's law, but in something which is consistent with perfect obedience; and his sin to consist, not in want of love to God and opposition of heart to him, but in something else; so that a person may be perfectly sinless — yea, really and perfectly holy, for he does the whole of his

a heart of flesh; and I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes." (Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27.) And God speaks of love to him, in which all virtue summarily consists, as the effect of his operation on the heart, which is called circumcising the heart to love him, which before was directly contrary to this. (Deut. xxx. 6.) A heart to know God, which is a virtuous, holy heart, is spoken of as the gift of God, and is what men are naturally without. "And I will give them a heart to know me that I am the Lord; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God." (Jer. xxiv. 7.) An inclination of heart to walk in God's ways is spoken of as the gift of God, and what men are naturally without, by Solomon in his prayer at the dedication of the temple: "That he may incline our hearts unto him, to walk in all his ways," etc. (1 Kings viii. 58.) St. Paul says, "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." (Rom. ix. 16.) That is, if any one is well inclined, wills and chooses that which is right, and works that which is good, by which he obtains salvation, this is not from any thing in him naturally, but is to be wholly ascribed to the grace of God, who has inclined his heart, and worked in him thus to will and do. And this is exactly parallel with the following words: "It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do." (Phil. ii. 13.) Here all holiness in men is ascribed to the powerful operation of God working in them, which lays the foundation, and is the cause, of all these exercises of will in which holiness consists; therefore, they in whom God does not thus work are wholly corrupt, have no degree of right disposition and will. All goodness in man is ascribed to God, as the Author of it, in the strongest terms, by St. Paul: "Who, then, is Paul, or who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye have believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered, but God giveth the increase. So, then, neither is he that planteth any thing, nor he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase." (1 Cor. iii. 5–7.) The increase which God is here said to give is holiness, or that faith by which they believed, even as God gave to every man. Agreeably to this he says to the believers at Corinth, "Who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou which thou hast not received?" (1 Cor. iv. 7.) And he says of himself, "But by the grace of God I am what I am; and his grace which was bestowed on me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." (1 Cor. xv. 10.) Here the apostle ascribes all his holiness to God, as the Author of it, by which he was made to differ from Saul the persecutor. And in his epistle to the Ephesians (chap. ii. 1–10) they are represented to be, in common with all mankind, dead in trespasses and sins; that is, destitute of all goodness, and wholly corrupt. And the life they had received in their recovery to holiness is ascribed to God, and their faith is said to be his gift; in order to which they were made new creatures by God, being created in Christ Jesus. This

duty — without a spark of true holiness, or the least degree of real conformity to the law of God.

I would forewarn my hearers, that I am about to teach no regeneration but what consists in the removal of that from man's heart for which he is altogether to blame and criminal for having it there, and the implantation of the principles of that life and holiness which man is always under infinite obligations to have and exercise at all times. And the more need men stand in of this regeneration by the Spirit of God, the more criminal and blameworthy they are. I proceed to observe, —

II. This regeneration of which I am speaking consists in a change of the will or heart. The truth of this observation appears from the foregoing, as it is a plain consequence from

whole passage, taken together, sets this matter in the strongest light, and asserts that all Christian virtue and every right disposition is from God, which he works in them by his power, and which is directly opposite to every thing that is in them by nature, even as opposite as life is to death. The same thing is again asserted by St. Paul: "And you, being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him." (Col. ii. 13.)

2. That men are naturally destitute of every degree of that which has the nature of true holiness is most evident from Scripture, in that the promises of salvation are every where made to them who exercise the least degree of this, or of that which is opposite to sin; and such have the character of good and holy persons, in distinction from others. Now, if the least degree of goodness entitles a man to salvation, and denominates him a good man, then all men are, naturally, wholly without any degree of this, and so wholly corrupt; for all men are represented as naturally in a state of condemnation, and wholly destitute of that which is necessary in order to their salvation.

It is needless to refer to particular passages of Scripture in proof of this observation. Every one who is in any measure acquainted with his Bible must know that good men are there characterized by the kind of their exercises, and not by the degree; so that he who has the least degree of that kind is hereby distinguished from the wicked, and the promises of God's favor and eternal life are made to him. Thus, he that loves God or his neighbor, he who has the least degree of this kind, is distinguished from the wicked as a good man, and is entitled to all the divine promises. And the promises of the gospel are made to faith, repentance, etc., not to any particular degree of these; therefore, to the last degree. And the least degree of respect and love to Jesus Christ, even that which will influence a person to give so much as a cup of water for his sake and out of respect to him, has the promise of eternal life. Yea, if a man does so much as truly desire salvation, so as heartily to ask for it, he has the promise of it.

Now, if all men were not by nature wholly corrupt, but have a degree of real goodness, or any thing of that kind, the matter could not be so stated in the Bible as it is. The promises must have been made, not to the least degree of goodness, or to him who has any thing of this kind, but to those who rise to a certain pitch or degree of goodness; and this must have been marked out and distinguished from all the lower degrees of this kind which all men have, and which they may have, and yet perish.

We may hence conclude with great certainty, therefore, that all men are naturally without any degree of that in which true holiness consists, and have not the least true respect to Jesus Christ, and are wholly without any true desires of him, or salvation by him; yea, are real enemies to him and all true holiness.

it. If the depravity and corruption of the heart is the only ground of the necessity of regeneration, then regeneration consists in removing this depravity, and introducing opposite principles, and so laying a foundation for holy exercises. But depravity or sin lies wholly in the heart, and not in the intellect or faculty of understanding, considered as distinct from the will, and not including that. So far as the will is renewed or set right, the whole mind is right; for sin and holiness lie wholly in this. If moral depravity does not lie in, or properly belong to, the faculty of the understanding or the intellect, as distinguished from the will, or heart, then that operation of the Spirit of God, by which this is in some measure removed and moral rectitude introduced, does not immediately respect the understanding, but the will or heart, and immediately

If it should be said that wicked men, even the worst of them, are represented as having some love to God, and that the badness of their character lies in loving other things more, when they are said to be "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God," (2 Tim. iii. 4,) and to "love the praise of men more than the praise of God," (John xii. 43,) it may be answered, —

1. Such expressions as these do not imply that these persons had the least degree of love to God. He who has no love to God certainly loves other things more than God, and this may as truly and properly be asserted of him as if he had love to God in some degree.

2. The original words in these passages might be as well rendered thus: lovers of pleasures *rather than* lovers of God, etc. The same words are so translated in the following places: John iii. 19. Acts v. 29. 1 Tim. i. 4. And it is certain the words in John iii. 19 — "And men loved darkness rather than light" — cannot mean, or imply, that they had some love to the light, but loved darkness more; for in the very next words it is said that they *hated* the light. "For every one that doeth evil *hateth* the light." If to be lovers of darkness rather (or more) than the light is not to love the light at all, but hate it, then to be lovers of pleasures more, or, rather, than lovers of God, is not to be lovers of God at all, but perfect enemies to him.

3. It is expressly asserted in many places in Scripture that mankind are perfectly destitute of all moral goodness.

It is said, (Gen. vi. 5,) "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Here the total corruption of the heart is affirmed in the strongest terms. It is indeed affirmed directly of the generation of men that lived immediately before the flood; but if mankind are not naturally thus wholly corrupt, it is hard to say how all that generation should be so. The case was plainly this: God had left man to himself, to go on in his own way till he had acted out himself and fully discovered what was in man, what is his true character. And God saw that it was this: "Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

This same thing is very plainly and repeatedly asserted in Rom. iii. 10, 18. The apostle here quotes a number of passages from the Old Testament, and applies them to all mankind, as what is true of every one in his natural state, otherwise the quotations would be nothing to his purpose. And here it is said, "There is none righteous, no, not one. There is none that understandeth; there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their feet are swift to shed blood. The way of peace have they not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes." This last sentence, if no more had been said, does fully express their total depravity, for "the fear of God is the

produces a change in the latter, not in the former. It is allowed by all, I suppose, that regeneration does not produce any new *natural* capacity or faculty in the soul. These remain the same after regeneration that they were before, so far as they are *natural*. The change produced is a moral change, and, therefore, the will or heart must be the immediate subject of this change, and of the operation that effects it; for every thing of a moral nature belongs to the will or heart.

As depravity or sin began in the will, and consists wholly in the irregularity and corruption of that, so regeneration, or a recovery from sin in the renovation of the mind, must begin here, and wholly consists in the change and renewal of the will. There is not, nor can there be, any need of any other change, in order to the complete renovation of the depraved

beginning of wisdom;" i. e., of all moral good. Therefore, where there is no fear of God there is no degree of moral goodness.

Man's total corruption in the state in which he is born is asserted by our Savior in what he says to prove that men must be born again in order to see the kingdom of God. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." (John iii. 6.) These words, whatever is meant by *flesh*, or being born of the flesh, do prove that man, in order to be saved, must have principles and dispositions implanted in him different from those with which he is born, which is called a being born of the Spirit; which could not be true, if man is not naturally destitute of all right principles and disposition. But the meaning and force of these words will more fully appear by comparing them with other passages of Scripture of the same import, and particularly considering what must be meant by *flesh*. It doubtless means the same here as in other places where the word is used for that which is distinguished from the spirit, and set in opposition to it, as it is here. But in these places it is plain it means human nature in its natural, corrupt state. St. Paul often uses the word in this sense, to be "in the flesh," and to "walk after the flesh:" to have a fleshly or carnal mind is to be in that state in which all men are who are not true Christians and have not the spirit of Christ, so are not born of the Spirit. (See Rom. viii. 5–9.) And the flesh, or the mind of the flesh, or the "carnal mind," which is the same, is here represented as opposite to the Spirit, and enmity against God; but the Spirit is a Spirit of holiness. Therefore, the spirit that is naturally in man, the spirit or mind of the flesh, is a spirit of sin, and opposition to God. This is again expressly asserted by the same apostle. (Gal. v. 17.) "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these two are contrary, the one to the other." And he then goes on to show what are the works of the flesh and what the fruit of the Spirit, and sets them in direct opposition one to the other; the former are nothing but sin, the latter holiness. (Gal. v. 19–23.) Now, if the flesh is in direct opposition to the Spirit, and the works of the flesh nothing but sin, and if all who are not born of the Spirit and become true Christians, and do not walk in the Spirit, and "crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts," — if all these are in the flesh, walk after the flesh, and do the works of the flesh, then all such are wholly corrupt, and their whole hearts are in opposition to holiness. But this is really the case, according to St. Paul. And in this view we may see the force of the words of our divine Teacher. He says, in order to confirm what he had said to Nicodemus, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." (Q. D.) The works of the flesh and all that it produces are like itself, even corrupt and sinful. What is produced by the Spirit of God in men is spiritual and holy; therefore, man must be born again of the Spirit, in order to be saved. He

mind, and its recovery to perfect holiness. Therefore, I think I have good grounds to assert, that in regeneration the will or heart is the immediate subject of the divine operation, and so of the moral change that is effected hereby. The Spirit of God in regeneration gives a new heart, an honest and good heart. He begets a right and good taste, temper, or disposition, and so lays a foundation for holy exercises of heart.*

But let us go on to the next particular.

must have new dispositions and principles which are from the Spirit of God, and directly opposite to all that is naturally in man. In one word, if by the spirit in these passages is meant the Spirit of God influencing and dwelling in the hearts of the saints, as a Spirit of life and holiness, and being in the Spirit, and living after the Spirit, means the exercise of holiness, (and it is impossible to find any other consistent meaning,) then their hearts who have not the Spirit of God are wholly corrupt, and perfectly opposite to God's law; yea, enmity against him.

And is not the total corruption of man's heart in his natural state plainly asserted by St. Paul, when he says, (Tit. i. 15, 16,) "Unto the pure all things are pure; but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled. They profess that they know God, but in works they deny him, being abominable, and unto every good work reprobate"? By the pure here are meant the pure in heart, the true believers in Christ which are born of God. All others are here represented as wholly defiled, without any good thing, altogether sinful and abominable.

This same total corruption of man is expressly declared in those passages of Scripture where all men are represented as dead in sin antecedent to their being made alive by the Spirit of God in regeneration. "Even when we were dead in sins hath he quickened us. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened." (Eph. ii. 1–5. Col. ii. 13.) Here they are said to be dead in their natural state, in distinction from the life of holiness to which they were brought by God's quickening power, and in opposition to it. If holiness is life, then death is sin without any degree of holiness; for there is no life in death. To put the matter beyond all dispute, it is here said what this death consists in, viz., sin. Hence it appears, I think, as evident as any thing can be made by the most express declaration, that when the Spirit of God regenerates the mind of man, he finds it perfectly destitute of all moral goodness, and wholly corrupt; and that regeneration consists in implanting principles of spiritual life and action in the heart in which there was no degree of that kind before. In this work, the Spirit of God finds the heart dead, or a heart of stone; wholly destitute of spiritual life and holiness, and as opposite to it as is a stone to living flesh; yea, as death is to life.

* It is difficult, and perhaps impossible, to form any distinct and clear idea of that in the mind or heart which is antecedent to all thought and exercise of the will or action, which we call principle, taste, temper, disposition, habit; by which we mean nothing properly active, but that from which right exercise of the will or action springs, as the reason and foundation of it, and without which there could have been no such exercise.

Perhaps the real truth of the matter, when examined with true, philosophic, metaphysical strictness, will appear to be this: that what we call principle, disposition, or frame of the mind, which is antecedent to all right exercise of the heart, and is the foundation and reason of it, is wholly to be resolved into divine constitution, or law of nature. But this I leave to the inquiry and decision of those who are inclined to examine this matter to the bottom, seeing I have not room here to go into a more particular consideration of it; and, whatever is at bottom the truth of the case, nothing will be said on this subject that immediately depends upon it.

III. In this change of which I am now speaking the Spirit of God is the only agent; and man, the subject, is wholly passive, does not act, but is acted upon.

In conversion man is active, and it wholly consists in his act; but in regeneration the Spirit of God is the only active cause. What has been said already brings this truth into view. This change lays the only foundation for all right views and exercises of the heart, and is, therefore, antecedent to all such. To suppose that the person is not wholly positive in this change, therefore, is to make him active before he begins to act. The man who is the subject of this change is, indeed, active antecedent to it; but by the supposition all the exertions and exercises of his heart are corrupt and wrong, and in direct opposition to the Spirit of God. Before this change the heart is wholly sinful, — a heart of stone, an impenitent, rebellious heart, — and all the exercises of it are acts of rebellion, in opposition to God, his Spirit, and law. This change is, therefore, wrought in the heart by the Spirit of God, in direct opposition to all its biases, inclinations, and exertions, by which they are, in a measure, overcome and destroyed, and a new and opposite principle and inclination created or implanted. Man is, therefore, so far from being active in producing this change, or having any hand in it by voluntarily falling in with, or submitting to, the divine operation, or coöperating with the Spirit of God, that the whole strength of his heart opposes it, until it is effected and actually takes place; he is, therefore, most perfectly passive. When Adam was created, and his mind formed, prepared, and disposed to right and holy action, it is easy to see he was altogether passive until he began first to act in consequence of his being thus formed, for which action a foundation was laid in his creation. This is a parallel with the case before us; only with this difference, that what is caused to take place in the mind in regeneration is in direct opposition to all that was in the heart before; whereas, in the formation of Adam's heart to right exercises and action, there was nothing to be opposed or counteracted.

IV. This change is wrought by the Spirit of God *immediately;* that is, it is not effected by any medium or means whatsoever.

The operation of the Spirit of God in this case is as immediate, or as much without any means, as that by which Adam's mind was at first formed. In that there was no medium, no means made use of in creating the mind formed and disposed to right action. God said, "Let it be," and it was. The Almighty first produced it immediately, or without any coöperating means. So it is in this case; there is no conceivable

medium by which this change is wrought any more than there is in creation out of nothing. The sinner's own thoughts, exercises, and endeavors cannot be a means of this change; for they are all in direct opposition to it, as has been just observed.

I would particularly observe here, that light and truth, or the word of God, is not in any degree a means by which this change is effected. It is not wrought by light.

This change is most certainly not effected by light, because it is by this change that the mind is illuminated; by this the way is prepared for the light to have access to the mind, so as to become the means of any effect. This operation of the Spirit of God by which a new heart is given is necessary in order to the illumination of the mind, and, indeed, is the very thing in which it consists, as it is the opening of the eyes of the blind. It is depravity or corruption of heart that holds the mind in darkness and shuts out the light. And this corruption of heart is that in which unregeneracy consists, as has been observed; and, in truth, spiritual darkness, or blindness of mind, consists in this, too. In order to the mind's being enlightened, that must be removed in which blindness consists, or which shuts light out of the mind; but that in which unregeneracy consists does blind the mind, and shuts out the light, or, rather, is the blindness itself. Therefore, men must be regenerated, and the corruption of their hearts in some measure removed, in order to the removal of their darkness and the illumination of their mind; for this is nothing else than giving them eyes to see, and can be done in no other possible way. Consequently, men are not illuminated before regeneration; but they are first regenerated, in order to introduce light into the mind. Therefore, they are not regenerated by light, or the truths of God's word.

But that we may well understand this matter, and have clear and distinct notions about it, let us more particularly consider in what respects men are naturally blind, or in what their blindness consists, and what is that light which is given by the Spirit of God.

The Scripture represents all men in their natural state as blind, so as not to discern and know the things of the Spirit of God; and it speaks of all the ungodly as illuminated so as to understand and know these things to which they were wholly blind before. Now, this blindness does not consist in any natural deficiency in the natural powers and faculties of the mind. Natural, or unregenerate men, are capable of all that light and discerning with respect to every thing which may be obtained by reason and speculation and is consistent

with total corruption of heart, or they may see every thing in matters of religion but the moral beauty and excellence of divine things. In this, therefore, their blindness wholly consists; they may see every thing but this, and what is involved in this and depends upon it; and in this they have no true light and discerning at all; and the light and discerning which is peculiar to true Christians consists in a sight and discerning of this beauty and what depends upon it; and this blindness has its foundation altogether in sin, or the total depravity of the heart, by which the heart is wholly without any degree of right or good taste, in the exercise of which alone this beauty and excellence is discerned and relished, and is perfectly under the power of a disposition and taste which has a perfect aversion to this, and relishes and cleaves to other things as the chief good.

For let be observed, that this beauty, excellence, and glory of divine things, in which the glory of God's moral character, kingdom, and government consists, — which is, therefore, moral beauty, or true holiness, — is not discerned by the understanding, considered as distinct from the will or heart, and not implying it, and is not the object of mere speculation; nor can it possibly be made so by any operation on the mind, or any supposed illumination whatsoever.*

This is the object of taste, which belongs to the will, and implies in it relish, inclination, and exercise of heart. This is as much the object of taste, or the discernment and relish of the heart, as the sweetness of honey is the object of that bodily sense which we call taste; and this beauty and glory can be discerned no other way, any more than the sweetness of honey can be discerned by feeling, or dipping the finger into it. Therefore, the mind that is wholly without any right taste or disposition is perfectly blind to this beauty, and must remain so eternally, unless a good taste or new heart is given; and there is no other possible way to get this light into the mind. It is as absurd to talk of illuminating the understanding of such a one, or giving him light in order to change and renew his heart and give a right taste, as it is to tell of making

* If any should say, "This is a bold assertion, and is limiting God in a very unbecoming manner; cannot he give what light he will to the understanding?" — I answer: This is no more limiting God than to say there can be no light and discerning at the same time that there is none, or that it is impossible by any operation whatever on a stone to bring it to the understanding and discerning of a man, without giving it the faculty of understanding and reason. The understanding, considered by itself, and apart from the will, is no more a capacity of discerning this beauty, or any beauty at all, and cannot be made so, without adding something to it over and above understanding, than a stone is a proper capacity of reasoning and choice. It is no impeachment of the divine power to say that cannot be done which, in itself, implies a contradiction.

a person that has no sort of taste, and never had, to discern the sweetness of honey antecedent to his having any taste, and in order to it; or of causing him who has no eyes, and is perfectly blind, to see the light of the sun in order to give him eyes to see.

Therefore, light is not, cannot be, given antecedent to regeneration, in order to influence or change the heart or will; for so long as the heart is wholly wrong, this light cannot be introduced; but a new heart, a right temper and taste, is first given by the immediate operation of the Spirit of God. This gives true discerning, and light and truth breaks in upon the mind thus prepared; and in viewing and relishing it, the heart exercises holiness. It is in this way, even by giving a discerning, understanding heart, or a degree of good taste of mind, that God "shines in the heart, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Cor. iv. 6.)

Suffer me further to say, so long as the heart is wholly corrupt, is not in the least degree friendly to the divine character and the things of God's moral kingdom, but full of opposition, hatred, and enmity against them, it is impossible that they should appear beautiful, lovely, and glorious; because, by the supposition, they are to the mind directly the contrary. The more they are attended to by such a mind, and the more they are seen and understood, — so far as they may be seen and understood by such a one, — the greater will be the mind's disgust at them, and the more it will hate them. Which way, then, will this light, which the mind is capable of in such a state, change the heart, and cause it to become friendly? or what tendency is there in it to produce this effect? Does the setting an object before the mind, in which it sees no beauty and excellence, but it appears perfectly disagreeable and odious, tend to make it friendly to it, and lead it to love that object? Surely no. If a man's taste is so formed that honey is perfectly disagreeable and nauseous to him, will reasoning about it, or often applying it to his palate, ever give him a true idea of the pleasant sweetness of it? So far from it, that the more this is done, the more disgust, hatred, and opposition will be excited.*

* They who have supposed that regeneration is wrought by light which is let into the understanding to influence and change the heart must be sensible, I think, how absurd and impossible the supposition is, if they will attend closely to the matter, unless by regeneration they mean nothing but active conversion, and suppose the heart is not wholly corrupt, but has a disposition to taste and relish the truth, and love it, whenever it is properly and fully set before the mind, and that there is really no need of any thing but to bring the mind

Moreover, I think the Scripture represents the matter in this light, and teaches that man is never illuminated, or sees the truth so as to be properly affected with it, but with a new heart, and in the exercise of right taste and disposition of mind, and not that light is first given as the means of producing a new heart. Our Savior says, "The light of the body is the eye; if, therefore, thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness." (Matt. vi. 22, 23.) By the single and evil eye is meant, not the intellect only, but the temper and disposition of the heart, which is evident by the context and other passages of Scripture where an evil eye is mentioned, particularly where our Savior says, "From within, out of the heart, proceedeth an evil eye." (Mark vii. 22.) Christ, therefore, here tells us what man's blindness consists in, viz., the evil disposition of his heart, or disorders of the will; and that the only way to remove this darkness, and introduce light in the mind, is to have the eye single; that is, to have a right disposition and taste of heart, which is, according to Scripture phrase, an understanding heart, as none but they who have such a heart have a true discerning and understanding in things of a moral nature; and Christ here tells us how this darkness is removed, and light is made to shine into the heart, viz., by the heart's becoming of a right temper and disposition, denoted by a single eye. An evil eye is not cured and made single by removing the darkness which that is the occasion of, and giving the light which that opposes and shuts out; but the eye must be first cured of its disorder, that the light may be admitted.

Our Savior teaches the same thing when he represents the Word of God or divine light taking place in the mind, so as

to serious and constant attention to the truth in order to its loving and obeying it. And then illumination, with them, is nothing but moral suasion. I know many have held to both these, — regeneration by light, and the total corruption of the hearts of the unregenerate, — but it is presumed they cannot show their consistency with themselves.

It also hence appears that saving faith is not a mere speculative assent to, or belief of, the truths of the gospel, but implies taste and exercise of heart; since it is in the exercise of a right or good taste only that the things of the Spirit of God are seen, which are the objects of faith, and in the discerning of which faith consists. No mere speculations, nor any thing that mere intellect is capable of, can give the idea of any thing properly moral; therefore, the presence of the idea in the mind of God's moral character, and so of the character of Christ, implies right exercises of heart. Therefore, he that loveth not has nothing in his heart answerable to God's moral character, — which is love, — knows not God. (1 John iv. 8.) It is therefore said, that with the heart man believeth. (Rom. x. 10.) And none believe that Jesus is the Christ but they who are born of God, and so have a right taste, a discerning and understanding heart.

to become effectual to salvation, by sowing seed in the earth so as to bring forth fruit. No seed, he observes, takes effect and brings forth fruit but that which falls on good ground which is before prepared and fitted to receive the seed. And he says, what answers to the good ground in man is an honest and good heart. (Luke viii. 15.) According to this representation, the word, or light of truth, takes place in the mind, and has effect only where it finds a heart already prepared and disposed to receive it, which Christ here calls an honest and good heart; that is, a regenerate, new heart. Therefore, men are not regenerated by the word, but the heart must be first renewed by the immediate operation of the Spirit of God in order to prepare it to understand and receive the word, or be illuminated by it. Therefore, none but the pure in heart see God. (Matt. v. 8.) They only whose hearts are renewed by the Spirit of God see his true character. An impure, corrupt heart is not capable of this light. Agreeably to this, God says, "I will give them a heart to know me," (Jer. xxiv. 7;) that is, I will create a new heart in them, which shall discern my true character. If the knowledge of God was previous to a new heart, and a means of regeneration, such an expression would not be proper, nor agreeable to the truth; but it is exactly so if the mind is renewed by the Spirit of God, in order to its being illuminated or coming to the light.

The same thing is taught by St. Paul when he says, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things." (1 Cor. ii. 14, 15.) Here, by natural man, is plainly meant the unregenerate, as he is opposed to the spiritual man, who is the true Christian. Such a one does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, and cannot know them. It is not possible, while he continues such, that he should have this light and knowledge. The reason of it is here given — "because they are spiritually discerned." That is, in the exercise of spiritual life and holiness, for which a foundation is laid in regeneration, by giving a spiritual taste, a discerning, understanding heart, by which they become spiritual, in opposition to natural, or carnal. But the spiritual, the regenerate man judgeth, understandeth, discerneth all things. Agreeably to this, it is said, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge." (Pr. i. 7.) That is, a principle of true piety and holiness lays the only foundation for true knowledge, and in this it has its first beginning. If a principle of true religion is the beginning of knowledge,

then knowledge does not begin before that or antecedent to it.*

Many other passages of Scripture, to the same purpose, might be produced. But enough has been said, I trust, to show that regeneration is not wrought by means of light, but that light or understanding takes place in consequence of regeneration, it being that by which the mind is illuminated, and the light is made to shine in the heart.†

V. This change, which we are now considering, is instantaneous, wrought at once, and not gradually.

The heart does not grow more and more disposed to that which is good before regeneration, but remains the same cor-

* This view of the matter will help us to an easy and natural explanation of those Scriptures which speak of understanding and knowledge, as being the sum of all moral good. The reason of this is because men do truly discern and understand things of a moral nature, which respect the heart, only in the exercise of a right taste, or spiritual life and holiness. And there is really no difference between seeing the truth, or true knowledge and understanding in these things, and those exercises of heart in which holiness consists, these being, in truth, one and the same thing. Whereas, on any other supposition such passages as these are, I think, inexplicable.

† It seems needful briefly to consider several objections which have been made against what is here advanced.

Obj. I. There are several places of Scripture in which it is expressly asserted that men are begotten or born again *by* the word or the truth. (See 1 Pet. i. 23. James i. 18. 2 Cor. iii. 18.) How is this consistent with what has been now advanced?

Ans. I. They who make this objection, and from such Scriptures as these conclude that it is by means of the word that the heart is renewed, do suppose, or must grant, that the word is introduced into the mind in order to its having this effect by the Spirit of God; and that this is done by some operation on the understanding, in order so to change or open it as that it may receive the word, or that the light may shine into it. And they must grant that this operation or work of the Spirit of God on the mind, whatever it is, is antecedent to light, or before it comes into the mind, as it is in order to it. Therefore, this effect or work wrought, by which the mind is prepared to receive the light, is not wrought by the word, but is an effect or work of the Spirit of God; for, by the supposition, it precedes the illumination of the mind, and is antecedent to any influence the word can have, as a means of any thing. So that they must hold to an immediate work of the Spirit of God, which is wrought without the word, and in order to light being introduced into the mind, as really as any one does or can. So that, so far as the operation of the Spirit of God is concerned in the matter, by which men are born of the Spirit, this is immediate and antecedent to any influence by the word. Therefore, according to them, when we speak of that change which is wrought by the Spirit of God, and is antecedent to conversion, we must say it is not wrought by the medium of light or by the word of God. Therefore, these texts speak of some consequent change which follows that which is wrought in the mind or understanding by the Spirit of God, in order to prepare the mind to receive the light. They must allow that all the change that the word is a means of producing is an active change, which consists in the exercises of the will, in the view of light and truth exhibited in the word, or in active conversion; and whatever is done before this is not effected by the word.

But, if this is so, then the Scriptures are not in the least contrary to what

rupt, rebellious heart, a heart of stone, until God takes it in hand and speaks the powerful word; and it immediately, or at once, becomes a heart of flesh, a new, regenerate heart. There is no possible medium between these two opposites, — a regenerate and unregenerate heart, — as there can be none between death and life, or non-existence and existence. The unregenerate heart, therefore, is in no degree well disposed or has the least right inclination, but is as far from all right disposition, till the instant in which it is regenerated, as it ever was. And it exists a new heart as instantaneously as did the mind of Adam when God created him. Nothing that precedes regeneration does any thing towards it by altering

has been asserted above, viz., that the change wrought by the Spirit of God, in which men are passive, and which is antecedent to all exercise of heart, is not wrought by means of the word. And it is as consistent with these Scriptures to suppose that this previous work of the Spirit of God should be on the will or heart, to change and renew that, and prepare it to receive the word, as it is to suppose that the understanding or intellect only is wrought upon. The objection, therefore, appears to be quite groundless, and is as much against the objector himself as any one else. However, since another answer is at hand, which is suggested in what has been said, I will just mention it.

Ans. II. It is plain that these Scriptures, and these of the like, have a direct and special respect to what is sensible in this change, which is active conversion. This change, taken in the whole of it, and so as including conversion, is not wrought without the word; but all that in which man is active, all that which is visible and sensible, in which active conversion consists, is by the word. It is in the view of the truth in God's word that the regenerate mind turns from sin to God; and if there was no truth to be seen, there could not possibly be any such change; therefore, with propriety is the matter expressed thus, and it is said to be done by or with the word, as a means. But we cannot hence infer that nothing in the whole affair is done immediately and without the word; for we know, and the objector must own, that whatsoever is done antecedent to the exercises of the mind is done wholly without the word. Let it, therefore, be remembered, that the objector himself is obliged to understand these Scriptures in the sense now given, which has been particularly shown in the first answer; therefore, in vain does he allege them in opposition to what has been advanced.

As to the reward, 2 Cor. iii. 18, — "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image," — any one who will look into the context may see that the apostle supposes a change to be passed upon them antecedent to their beholding the glory of the Lord, by which the veil was taken off from their face, or, rather, from their heart; in consequence of which, with open face, or, as the word in the original is, with unveiled face, they saw the divine character in its glory. There was, therefore, something done to their hearts antecedent to their activity and to their beholding the glory of the Lord, by which the veil was taken off. This the apostle speaks of in the context. "Nevertheless, when it (i. e., the heart) shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away." This veil is taken away by regeneration, which, therefore, is not done by the word. These words do then confirm that against which they are brought as an objection, and show that there must be a change of the heart antecedent to any light, by which the veil of darkness is taken from the heart, and it is, in a sense, turned to the Lord.

Obj. II. It is most agreeable to the nature of the soul and the manner of its acting to suppose that the understanding is enlightened, and the will thereby bowed and persuaded to follow its dictates. All that men want is to see

the bent and bias of the heart so as to time it towards holiness in the least degree. But the heart continues to oppose that to which it is brought in regeneration till that instant in which it becomes a new heart; and it takes no time to effect this change. The change is, indeed, imperfect at first, the heart is renewed but in part; and after this renovation is begun, it is carried on gradually to greater degrees, until the heart is perfectly renewed, in a work of sanctification. But this new life is first begun instantaneously.

VI. This operation of the Spirit of God, by which men are regenerated, is altogether unperceivable.

The subjects of this change know nothing what is done, or

and understand the truth, and this will effectually influence their wills and lead them to choose that which is good. And this is most agreeable to the manner in which the Scripture expresses this matter, which speaks of the understanding being enlightened, as what is necessary and sufficient to move the affections.

Ans. I. It is not true that enlightening the understanding, or giving all the light that the judgment or understanding, considered as distinct and separate from the will, is capable of, is sufficient to gain the will. This appears from fact and experience, in many cases. The understanding and judgment have clear conviction, in many instances, which has no influence on the will; but that rebels against the clearest light that can be given in this way.

If it should be said, as it often has been, that though mere speculative light and conviction does not always influence the will, yet it is certain that the will always follows the last dictates of the practical understanding or judgment, I reply, that this is giving up the point; for it will be found, on examination, that if practical judgment has any meaning, it intends something which implies a sense of heart, or a degree of inclination or will; for every thing that is more than merely speculative is more than mere intellect is capable of; and every thing practical, or that relates to practice, belongs to the heart or will. Where there is a practical judgment there is a degree of sense and discerning which belongs to the heart, and implies taste and inclination of heart. The plain truth of the matter is, that all true light and discerning, with respect to good and evil, beauty and deformity, things lovely or hateful, and all actual ideas of these properly belong to the heart or will, or depend upon taste, and consist in a sense of heart. And the intellect or understanding considered as without the heart or will, and distinct from it, is not capable of these ideas in any degree whatever. Were there nothing but mere intellect, the ideas of beauty and excellence could have no existence in the mind. These ideas take place in the mind by means of taste or inclination of heart, and depend wholly upon it, and are exactly as that is. Therefore, without this taste and discerning of heart there is no true light and discerning with respect to these objects, so nothing that will influence and move the will. Whenever, therefore, there is a practical judgment concerning any thing that is presented to the mind, as the object of choice, that is good, eligible, and excellent, there is taste and choice already begun. Therefore, —

Ans. II. It is so far from being agreeable to the nature of the mind, and the manner of its acting, to suppose that light in the understanding effectually changes the heart and influences the will, without any previous taste or disposition in the heart whereby it is prepared to be pleased with, relish and choose, such particular objects, that such a supposition is directly contrary to the nature of the soul, and implies the greatest absurdity. If the heart is wholly corrupt, and perfectly hates and opposes that which is good and excellent, and if the whole inclination and will is towards that which is evil, unreasonable, and odious, there is no possible way to rectify it and bring it to a right inclination

that any thing is done, with respect to their hearts, and are not sensible of any operation and change in any other way but by the effect and consequence of it. We are conscious or sensible of nothing in our own mind; we feel and perceive nothing but our own ideas, thoughts, and exercises; but, as has been observed, the active change or conversion consists in these, and they are the fruit and effect of regeneration, or that work of the Spirit of God, of which I am now speaking. That which takes place with respect to our minds antecedent to the views and exercises we have, as the foundation and cause of them, is, by the supposition, perfectly unexperienced; but this is true of the operation and change now under con-

and choice but by an immediate operation on the heart, which, in Scripture, is called taking away the stony heart and giving a heart of flesh, and may be called giving a new taste or temper of mind. No other possible operation and influence on the mind, no change in the understanding, can give light, and cause that to appear beautiful and excellent which it now hates, or introduce the least degree of right inclinations and choice, as has been before observed and proved.

When Adam was first made, a foundation was laid in his mind for his discerning and understanding in things of a moral nature, and for the exercise and practice of virtue, not in his understanding merely, but in the temper and disposition of his heart with which he was created; and no degree of intellectual powers, of light and understanding, which was distinct from this, would have done any thing towards securing the exercise of his will in holiness; and sin, or corruption, first took place in his heart or will, in which consists the blindness of mind which is common to him and all his children while wholly corrupt; and the relief and recovery must begin where the disease began, even in changing and renewing the heart, which is the seat of blindness and sin; and so far as this is done, a foundation will be laid for the exercises of holiness, and the light which sin excluded will shine in the heart, and the understanding will need no other illumination, but will do its office well.

It has been observed, that, according to the objector's own scheme, there must be a supernatural operation on the mind in order to recover it to light and holiness; that is, an immediate operation antecedent to light, and in order to it, which has nothing of the nature of moral suasion; and if the heart is the immediate subject of this operation, it is in no degree more contrary to the nature and manner of the exercises of the human mind than if the understanding was the immediate subject of it. Yea, as has been shown, this is the only natural, or even possible, way in which the soul can be wrought upon, so as to recover it to true light and holiness.

Ans. III. It is true, the Scripture speaks of the eyes of the understanding being enlightened; of operating on men's eyes, and turning them from darkness to light, etc. But it nowhere speaks of this as meaning the faculty of understanding as distinct from the will, and as that which, by being enlightened, influences the will, and produces a right disposition of heart. Nor do we find that the Scripture, where such expressions are used, makes this distinction between the faculties of the soul, of understanding and will; but to have the eyes opened and the understanding enlightened, in Scripture language, is to have that light and discerning in divine things which takes place in the whole mind when renewed and brought to a right taste and temper, and in the exercise of an understanding heart, without which all the light the intellect is capable of is but darkness. Therefore, they who have not this discerning, understanding heart, which consists in a good taste, are, in Scripture, said to have the understanding darkened and blinded; or to have eyes, and see not; and to have this good taste and discerning of heart is to have the eyes of the under-

sideration. All the notice we can have of this operation and change, and all the evidence there can be that our minds are the subjects of it, is by perceiving that which is the fruit and consequence of it by our own views and exercises, which are new, and we find to be of such a nature and kind that we have ground to infer that they are the effect of the operation of the Spirit of God, or the fruits of the Spirit, by which we are become new creatures.

When Adam was created a living soul, the immediate divine operation was not perceived by him, for he had no perception of any thing until he actually existed and the work of his creation was finished: he did not begin to be conscious of any

standing enlightened, and to see with the eyes, or perceive with the heart. The plain truth is, that, according to Scripture, he who has no right taste and inclination of heart is blind and without understanding; and he who has a wise and understanding heart, whose heart tastes and relishes moral beauty, has true light and understanding. Not only the intellect, but the whole mind, is the exercise of true taste; and discerning is understanding, or knowledge. Therefore, by understanding, knowledge, and wisdom, in Scripture, is commonly meant true holiness, which consists not at all in mere speculation, but in the exercise of a right taste and inclination of heart, in a view and sense of divine truth. So that the Scripture account of this matter is perfectly agreeable to the doctrine against which the objection is made, and serves to confirm it.

Obj. III. If persons are regenerated before they are enlightened and believe on Christ, what will become of them, where will they go, to heaven or to hell, if they die after they are regenerated, and before they believe? It seems they are fit for neither; their hearts are renewed, so cannot go to hell; but they are in an unpardoned, unjustified state; therefore, cannot go to heaven.

Answer. And what if a person who is elected to salvation dies in an unconverted state; will he be saved or not? Let the objector answer this question, and he will drop his objections, having fully answered it himself. His answer must be, There never was, and never will be, such an instance. All that are elected shall be converted before they die.

Obj. IV. This doctrine is directly contrary to that of some eminent divines, famous for learning and piety, who are now dead and gone to heaven. Must we conclude they taught such an error? Is it not arrogant, and almost impious, to rise up and contradict these holy men?

Answer. If it could serve any good purpose, I might say, that as great a number of divines, as old, or older than they, and as famous for piety and learning, might be mentioned, who are on our side of the question; and we might proceed to set father against father, and try who shall get the most on his side. But this is, in truth, nothing to the purpose. The opinion of the most venerable and renowned fathers in this case, in determining what doctrines are true and what are not so, ought not to have the least weight; and it is foolish, and even carries a degree of impiety in it, for us who have the Bible in our hands to lay the weight of a straw on the opinion of the wisest and best men that ever lived. I am sorry to have any occasion to make this observation at this time of day among Protestants. It is very weak and ridiculous, if not something worse, for a divine to attempt to support or confirm any doctrine by appealing to the judgment and decision of any man, or to run down and reject any tenet that is advanced, merely because it is a new doctrine or embraced by few, and is contrary to the opinion of the fathers and what has been established by common consent. Since people in general are too apt to be influenced by this, and it is common for every one to have his father, on whose sleeves he pins his faith in a great measure, without examining for himself, it is a pity they should be upheld and confirmed in it by public teachers, when it is of such importance

thing until this was over, and then he perceived nothing but what was the fruit and consequence of the divine operation. So it is in the new creature, by which men are born of the Spirit of God.

I make this remark partly to detect and expose the delusion of those who think they feel the motions of the Spirit of God on their hearts, somewhat as one body is sensibly touched and impressed by another, antecedent to all exercises of their own and independent of them, and place great part of their religion in those feelings or impulses which they call the operation of the Spirit of God, and which immediately suggests to them what is truth, and what is duty, which they think is to be led by the Spirit. We have no way to determine what is the cause of the ideas and sensations of our hearts, whether we are influenced by the Spirit of God or by a wicked spirit, but by considering their nature and tendency, whether they are such as the Scripture tells us are the fruits of the Spirit.*

VII. In the work of regeneration, by which men are born of the Spirit, God acts as a sovereign.

When I speak of God's acting in a sovereign way, I do not mean that he acts above or without all reason and motive, or merely because he will, for God never acts so in any instance whatsoever. Such sovereignty and arbitrariness is in no case to be ascribed to God, for this would be to dishonor and reproach him as acting without any wisdom or holiness. The sovereignty of God consists in his being above all obligation to his creatures, and so infinitely above any direction, influence, and control from them in any thing that he does. In this sense, God is an infinite sovereign; he does just as he pleases, not being influenced by any obligation he is under to any one, any further than he has been pleased to oblige himself by promise or some other way.

Sovereignty is, therefore, in a peculiar manner, essential to

that they should, by all possible means, be beat off from this sandy foundation, and learn to judge for themselves, by "reasoning out of the Scriptures," and "searching them daily, to see if these things are so."

* I would not be understood to suggest that the Spirit of God is in no sense discerned and perceived by those in whom he operates and dwells. Holy exercises of heart, which are excited and maintained by the Spirit of God, are in their own nature as perceivable as any other exercises, and may be known and distinguished from all others, as they differ from every other perception and exercise in nature and kind, and are directly opposite to all the motions and exercises of a moral kind that are naturally in the heart; and these exercises may be so strong and vigorous as to carry their own evidence with them, and be attended with a consciousness and assurance that they are holy and from the Spirit of God. In this way, I suppose, it is that "the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." (Rom. viii. 16.) But in this case there is nothing directly perceived but the views and exercises of our own minds, in which we are active, and which are the fruit of the divine agency.

all acts of grace, or grace in all cases is sovereign grace, and what is not so is no grace at all; for, whatever good is bestowed, if he that grants it is under any original obligation to do it, or is obliged to do it from the reason and nature of things, and so owes it to him that receives it, it is only an act of justice, and the nature of paying a debt, and there is no grace in it; for grace is free, unobliged, undeserved favor, and that which is not so is not grace.

In the case before us, God acts in the highest sense and degree as a sovereign, he being not only under no obligation to grant such a favor to any one when he does it, but there is in the sinner something infinitely contrary to this, even infinite unworthiness of the favor granted, and desert of infinite evil. Therefore, whenever God changes and regenerates the heart of a sinner, he does what he was under no sort of obligation to the sinner to do, but might justly leave him to the hardness of his own heart to perish in his sins forever. So that God in determining to whom he will grant this infinite favor, and in giving it to some and withholding it from others, "has mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." What the sinner does before he is regenerated does not lay God under any degree of obligation to him by promise or any other way, for he complies with none of God's commands or offers in the least degree. He is not so much as willing to accept of offered mercy, but opposes God and his grace with all his heart, however anxious he may be about his eternal interest, and how much soever he prays and cries for mercy and continues a perfect enemy to the just God and the Savior, until his heart is renewed, and the enmity slain by the regenerating influence of God's Spirit.

I should now proceed to consider this change in which men are born of God, as it implies, and consists in, that in which they are active, in the views and exercises of their own hearts, for which that which I have been speaking of lays the foundation, were it not that a question may probably arise in the minds of some upon what has been said, which it may be proper to attend to and answer here.

Question. If these things are so, — if men are not active, but perfectly passive, in regeneration, and the work is wrought by the Spirit of God without means, and God in this acts as a sovereign, having mercy on whom he will have mercy, and leaving whom he will to perish, whatever are the sinner's circumstances, whatever means are used, and notwithstanding all the pains the sinner takes for his own salvation, — then what encouragement and what reason is there for the sinner's using any means, or for others to take any pains or use means with him for his salvation?

Answer. If what has been now said is agreeable to the truth, there is certainly no reasonable encouragement to the use of means from a view to lay God under any obligation hereby to sinners to regenerate and save them, for God will be under none, nor can he be; he is infinitely far from this.

Nor is there any reason and encouragement to use means with a view that they shall in any degree effect this change, or do any thing towards it, or properly be any means of changing the heart, for this change is wrought immediately.

Neither is there any encouragement to use means in order to make the sinner's heart better antecedent to regeneration, or that his case may hereby be made less miserable, if he finally perishes in his sins. None, surely, will imagine that if the sinner continues impenitent, and dies in his sins, the means that have been used for his salvation will be of any advantage to him. It is certain they will not, but the contrary; for this, as well as every thing else, will, in this case, turn against him. The more means are used with the sinner, the greater advantages he enjoys, the more instruction is given him, and the more light and conviction he has in his own conscience, and the greater sense he has of the reality and importance of invisible things, of the worth of his soul, and of eternal happiness, and of the dreadfulness of eternal damnation, — I say, the more there is of these things the more miserable he will be, if he continues impenitent and perishes after all; for all these things do greatly aggravate the crime of his continuing in sin, so are the occasion of his being more guilty than if they had not taken place. The preaching of the gospel, and so all means of salvation, are a savor of death unto death to them that perish. (2 Cor. ii. 17.) It is most unreasonable, therefore, to use any means with a sinner in order to his salvation, with a view that they shall be to his advantage, if he continues impenitent and abuses them; for to such they will have directly the contrary effect. (See Matt. xi. 20–24.)

And the use of means is so far from making their hearts better, more inclined to obedience and holiness, or less obstinate, while they continue impenitent and unregenerate, that it is the occasion of the contrary to a very great degree. The heart, by resisting means and opposing light and truth, rather grows harder than softer. And the more means are used, and the more the mind is awakened to attention, and the greater light and conviction it has, while the heart continues perfectly impenitent and obstinate in opposition to all this, the more strong and vigorous, as well as more aggravated and criminal, are the sinful exertions of it; for the more the powers of the mind — which is wholly corrupt — are awakened and roused, the more

strong and active are the sinful principles of the heart; and it requires a greater degree of opposition of heart to resist and continue impenitent under ten degrees of light and conviction than it does to continue so under but one degree of this.

Pharaoh, under all the rousing, softening, powerful means used with him to induce and persuade him to obey Jehovah and let the people of Israel go from under his oppressive hand, and all the attention he gave to that matter under all the conviction he had in his own mind, and the trouble and distress with which he was exercised, grew harder rather than more pliable; and the corruption of his heart was exercised in a much higher degree, and was much more aggravated and criminal, than if no means had been used with him, and he had remained without any light and conviction of conscience. But this instance of Pharaoh is very parallel with that of a sinner under conviction, with whom special means are used to bring him to a submission to God, who, notwithstanding, absolutely refuses, and continues in impenitence, as might easily be shown; and it was doubtless designed to be an image of this. All means used with unregenerate sinners, if they live and die so, will have the same effect and consequence with respect to them that they had in Pharaoh. Therefore, if it was known concerning any one that he would certainly persist and perish in impenitence, there could be no reasonable inducement and motive to use any means with him in order to bring him to repentance, with a view and design of any benefits to him. They who continue impenitent and perish will have no good by any thing; but all their enjoyments and advantages of every kind, all the means used with them for their good, and all the light and conviction of their own consciences will turn against them, and be the occasion of their greater destruction.

Why, then, are means to be used? What reason and encouragement to do it? is still the question. I therefore proceed to a positive answer.

I. The use of means with sinners may answer great and important ends, even though they continue impenitent and perish more dreadfully than if no such means had been used; which might easily be proved, was there need. God answered his own wise and glorious ends in the means he used with Pharaoh, notwithstanding he continued obstinate. But, —

II. Means are absolutely necessary in order to the conversion and salvation of men, as much so as if there was no other agent except the subject, and nothing done but what was effected by means. For, —

First. Means are necessary to be used in order to prepare

persons for regeneration; for, consistent with all that has been said, a preparatory work is as important and necessary as on any plan whatsoever. God can, indeed, just as easily regenerate one as another; he has power to regenerate the most stupid, benighted heathen on earth, or the most ignorant, or deluded, erroneous person in the Christian world, at any moment he pleases, without the use of any means. But as this would not be wise and proper, in this sense it cannot be done, because God never did, and never will, do any thing which is not wise and proper to be done. The reason why it is not wise and suitable to give a person a new heart in such circumstances and without the use of means is, that in such a case there is no foundation, provision, or opportunity for right views and exercises, if a new heart should be given, therefore no good end answered by it. This would be like creating a monster without any parts or capacity whereby he might live and act in any proper way, but so as to act monstrously, and even counteract and destroy itself; or as if a man should be made without feet or hands, or without any mouth to take the food necessary to support life; or as if an animal should be made in such a situation and circumstances as that it is impossible for him to come at the things necessary for the support of his existence and life.

When God causes this moral change in any man, it is in order to new life and action; therefore, he will not do it where there is no opportunity and means for the support and exercise of this new life; for, though men are not regenerated by means, yet means must be antecedently used, in order to persons' being prepared to act properly when regenerated. For instance, the many errors and delusions that all adult, uninstructed persons, and even all careless sinners are in, must be, at least in a good degree, removed, and there must be some considerable degree of speculative knowledge about the things of religion, in order to the proper exercise of holiness or the new creature; and there must be more knowledge than a careless, secure sinner ever attains to, whatever instruction he has, and however much he is given to speculations on the things of religion. The things necessary to be known in order to the proper exercise of Christian holiness are never understood by a secure sinner as they may be by an unregenerate sinner, when, in the use of means, his attention and conscience are thoroughly awakened, and as they must be understood in order to the mind's being properly prepared for the exercise of grace. Such an awakened sinner will commonly learn more of those truths that are most necessary to be known, in a very short time, than others will ever learn under the best instruction.

Besides, not only speculative knowledge is important and necessary in this case, but a sense of heart of the truths contained in divine revelation; an attention of mind to them, and knowledge of them which is more than merely speculative, is necessary in order to there being a needful preparation and opportunity for the new heart, when given to exercise itself properly and to the best advantage. There is a sense of heart, of what may be called the *natural* good and evil, contained in those things which are set before men in divine revelation, — such as the happiness of heaven and misery of hell, and so a sense of the vast importance of obtaining an interest in Christ, a sense of the sinfulness of their own hearts, and their great guilt, their total undone, lost, helpless state, and, in one word, a sense of every thing in religion except moral beauty and excellence, and what depends upon this, — I say, there is a sense of heart of these things, which an unregenerate sinner is capable of, which none but an awakened sinner whose conscience is thoroughly roused, and who is deeply engaged in the concerns of his soul, ever obtains; which prepares the mind to exercise Christian holiness when renewed, and without which there can be no proper foundation or preparation for it. But in order to bring the minds of the unregenerate to this, either to a tolerable degree of speculative knowledge or a sense of heart of the reality and importance of eternal things, and of their lost, miserable, helpless state, which they may have antecedent to regeneration, and which lays the only good foundation, and is the necessary provision and preparation for the proper exercise of the new principle which is introduced in regeneration, — I say, in order to bring the minds of the unregenerate to this, means are absolutely necessary, as it can be effected no other way.

Hence the propriety and importance of using means with sinners. The more painfully and thoroughly they are instructed, and truth set before them in the most clear and convincing light, and the more warm and pathetical the addresses made to them are, tending to rouse their attention and affect their hearts, and the more they attend, and the greater their engagedness is, the more are they prepared for regeneration, and the more likely it is that their hearts will be changed, as in this way only they are in circumstances most advantageous for the exercise of spiritual life, when new principles are implanted.

Therefore, there is no ground of expectation or hope that any person will be regenerated while without the use of means, or in a state of ignorance, delusion, and security, unconcerned and unactive with respect to his soul and his eternal

interest; and there is hope for sinners that they shall be regenerated and converted in proportion to their religious advantages, together with the degree of light and conviction of conscience they have, and their attention to the true interest of their souls, and engagedness of mind about it; and we may well despair of the salvation of sinners who are "at ease in Zion," unless they can be awakened to attention so as to receive instruction, and to a solicitude about their eternal interest.

On this state of the case, and in this view, who is there that cannot see the reason, importance, and necessity of the use of means, and the great encouragement thereto? The use of means is as important as salvation itself, as there can be no reasonable hope of the latter but in the way of the former; and there are as strong motives and as much encouragement to the use of means as all the dreadfulness of damnation, and the importance and worth of eternal happiness, can give. Any one may be challenged to give a better reason and greater encouragement for the use of means on any plan whatsoever.*

Secondly. The use of means is absolutely necessary in order to any exercise of the new heart or of Christian holiness at any time. If we set aside the consideration of a preparatory work, and the necessity of that, in order to regeneration, in the view that has been given of it under the former particular, yet there will be a reason for the use of means, and a necessity of them, in order to salvation. If there is no truth set before the mind objectively, or by way of external exhibition, in any sense and degree, and if there is no attention of the mind and application in the use of any means whatever, the new heart must

* If any should ask, why a person may not be regenerated before any means are used, and while he is in a state of security, ignorance, and delusion, and then, after he is regenerated, means may be applied proper to promote the exercise and life of the new man; if so, there would be no need of this antecedent preparation in the use of means, and the sinner would be as likely to be regenerated without the use of means as with them; and when he is regenerated he will naturally, and of course, attend and go into the use of those means that are necessary to promote this new life.

Instead of a more particular and full answer to such a querist, I shall now only ask the following questions: Why did not God create man before he made the world or provided any accommodations or place for his subsistence? Why did he not create sight before there was any light or objects to be seen, and all other senses, while there were no objects towards which they might exercise themselves? Why was not life breathed into the dry bones that Ezekiel in vision saw, while they lay in a confused heap, that after this they might be brought together, every one to his proper place? Why must every bone be first brought to his bone, and sinews and flesh come up upon them, and skin cover them, before life is breathed in them? Why is it not most proper and best that a child should be born before there is any preparation made for its reception and nourishment, any food or clothes provided for it, or any arms to receive it and nourish the life that is given?

lie dormant, if there is one, and there can be no possible right exercise. For it is written, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Therefore, means are necessary in order to conversion, or the exercise of faith and holiness, without which men cannot be saved. He, therefore, who lives and dies in the neglect of the use of means must perish. The use of means, then, is of as great importance to men as is their salvation; and the motives and encouragement to a constant attendance on them, in this view of the matter, are equal to the importance and worth of salvation.

We come now to the second thing proposed, which is to consider the change that is included in being born of God, in which men are active, and consists in the views and exercises of heart, which are the genuine fruit and effect of the divine operation and change of which I have been speaking, and which is called active conversion.

We have been so lengthy on the other head, that we must be shorter here, and give only a general view of it, without descending into all those particulars that might be mentioned and enlarged upon.

When the mind is regenerated, and a new heart given, divine things will appear in a new light, and the heart will exercise itself in quite a new manner. The first thing that now presents itself to the mind is the omnipresent and glorious God, the sum of all being and excellence. Now the heart sees and feels that there is a God with a conviction and assurance that it never had before, and is entertained and fixed in a calm, sweet view and sense of greatness, majesty, wisdom, justice, goodness, excellence, glory, with which it is captivated and charmed. Now the person finds himself surrounded with Deity, and sees God manifesting himself every where and in every thing. The sun, moon, and stars, the clouds, the mountains, the trees, the fields, the grass, and every creature and thing conspire in silent yet clear, powerful, and striking language to declare to him the being, perfections, and glory of God. Now he sees he never before really believed there was a God. He never had any idea and sense of such a Being before, nor received the abundant and all-convincing evidence of his being and perfections.

In this view he sinks into nothing, as it were, before this great and glorious Being, and his heart is filled with a sense of the glorious greatness and excellence of God, and his infinite worthiness to be loved, obeyed, and honored by all intelligent creatures. Now, therefore, he sees the reasonableness and excellence of that law which requires all to love him with all their hearts; so the divine law comes into view, in all its

justice, goodness, and glory. His heart approves of it as most worthy to be maintained and honored, while it requires perfect, persevering love and obedience, on pain of eternal damnation. He, therefore, now sees the infinite evil of sin, its infinite odiousness and ill desert, and, in this view, sees his own sinfulness and vileness, and sinks down, as it were, infinitely low, in a sense of his own infinite odiousness and guilt; and hates, judges, and condemns himself, heartily acknowledging the justice of his condemnation, feeling himself most righteously cast off forever into eternal misery, and, therefore, in himself, wholly lost and infinitely miserable.

And when he sees what he has done, how he has broken and dishonored the divine law, and despised and contemned God, and trampled on his most sacred authority, how infinitely unreasonable and injurious to the divine character he has been, he desires and wishes with all his heart that the mighty breach could be made up, and the injury repaired and removed; that the blot he has cast on the glorious character of God might be wiped off, and full recompense and atonement made; and he has not the least wish that he might be pardoned and obtain the favor of God in any other way; and he immediately sees and feels that he is infinitely far from any possibility of doing this himself; that he is infinitely in debt, and has nothing to pay; has nothing but infinite vileness, unworthiness, and guilt to offer, which can only pull down divine vengeance on his head; that his repentance, however sincere, can do nothing towards making up the breach, or in the least degree atone for the least sin. He is, therefore, far from any disposition or thought to attempt to offer any thing of his own, by which he might obtain the forgiveness of his sins and the favor of God, which now appear infinitely important and desirable. Thus the law comes, sin revives, and he dies.

And now he is prepared to receive the good news reported in the gospel, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world!" This is to him "good tidings of great joy." Behold, the Son of God, who is equal with God, and is God, who himself made the world, has become a man; has been in the world, and, by his own obedience and sufferings unto death, has made full reparation and atonement for sin, is risen from the dead, and exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on high, to give repentance and remission of sins, and is ready to pardon and save all that come unto him, to which all, even the most guilty and vile, are freely excited. Now the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ shines in his heart, and the character of the Mediator appears to him in all its fulness and glory; and

the way of salvation by Christ appears wise, excellent, and glorious, and pleases, rejoices, and charms his heart; and in a sense of his own infinite unworthiness, vileness, and guilt, he puts his whole trust in him for pardon and salvation, deliverance from the guilt and power and pollution of sin, "desiring to be found in him, not having his own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

And while he attends to the dignity and excellence of Christ's person, and sees what he has done and suffered to obey and honor the divine law and make atonement for sin, and sees and tastes the wonderful, amazing goodness of God and the Redeemer, exercised and manifested in this redemption, his sense of the worthiness of the law of God and the infinite vileness of sin rises higher and higher; and his heart is more and more warmed with love to God and the Redeemer, and filled with hatred and abhorrence of sin, and is especially broken in repentance and self-abhorrence, in a sense of his amazing ingratitude and vileness in neglecting and opposing this way of salvation, and slighting and rejecting such a Savior.

And now, with all his heart he renounces the ways of sin, and with pleasure and strength of soul gives himself up to God through Jesus Christ, to serve and obey him forever, feeling it to be the happiest thing in the world, the greatest privilege he can imagine, to be wholly devoted to God in all the ways of strict and pure religion and holy obedience.

In these views and exercises of heart, active conversion from sin to God does consist; and all this is implied in faith in Jesus Christ, or receiving him, and believing on his name; and every one in whose mind these things do not take place, in the sum and substance of them, is not converted or born of God. Though I pretend not to say that the views and exercises of every one that is converted do sensibly take place exactly in the order and connection in which I have now placed them, — so that every true convert shall be able to recollect that these things passed in his mind just so, and in this order, from step to step, — yet he must be sensible that all this has taken place in his heart and abides with him; and it may be demonstrated that they do in fact take place in this connection and order, and that there is no other possible way, though all may be so much at once, as it were, and the exercises of the mind may be so quick as not to be attended with any consciousness of their being in this particular arrangement.

But to proceed.

The person of whom I am speaking is now become a truly

humble person, in a sense of his own meanness, vileness, and infinite unworthiness and guilt, and his absolute dependence on God for strength and righteousness. This lays him low before God, and he is disposed to walk humbly with him, working out his own salvation with fear and trembling, i. e., in a sense of his own nothingness, weakness, and insufficiency with respect to any good thing, and his perfect, continual, and, as it were, infinite dependence on God, who alone worketh in him to will and to do; and as he has a more full, clear, and constant view and sense of his own amazing vileness and misery than he can have of others, he is naturally disposed in lowliness of mind to prefer others to himself, and led to a meek and humble conduct and behavior among men.

And he has now a new view and sense of the truth, divinity, excellence, and sweetness of the Word of God; and he delights in the Holy Scriptures, and is disposed to meditate therein day and night. They are more precious to him than much fine gold, and sweeter than the honey and the honeycomb. He now becomes a devout and zealous worshipper of God. With pleasure he daily enters into his closet, and prays to and praises Him who sees in secret, and would not be deprived of this privilege for all the kingdoms of the world. He loves to join with Christians in social prayer and religious conversation; and his feet run with constancy and eagerness to the place of public worship, where he devoutly joins in prayer and praise, and with great attention hears the word preached, receives instruction, and is quickened thereby.

And as he has given himself up to God sincerely and without reserve, he is from hence naturally led to desire to do it publicly, by espousing the cause of God, and appearing on his side, as a disciple and follower of Christ before the world, by a public profession of religion. And it appears to him to be a great privilege to be among the number of God's visible people, to be united with them, and have the advantage of their Christian watch and care; and without delay he joins with them, and attends on all Christ's holy institutions.

And in this change he becomes a friend to mankind, and his heart is filled with love to them. This effectually, and at once, cures him of all the ways of deceit, injustice, and injuriousness in his concerns and dealings with his neighbor, of which the world is so full, and which are so common among professing Christians; and he is immediately possessed with that harmlessness, honesty, sincerity, truth, integrity, and faithfulness of heart which is peculiar to a true Christian; and he is not only just and upright, but his heart is full of goodness, kind affection, tenderness, and mercy, which prompts him to

do good to all as he has opportunity, especially to seek and promote, in all the ways he can, the welfare of their souls in their eternal salvation.

In a word, he heartily devotes himself to the service of God and his fellow-men, as his whole and only business, and to this end is faithful and diligent in his own proper station and calling; "not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." And in these things he perseveres and makes progress to the end of life; for conversion is but the beginning of the same thing which is carried on and makes advances unto perfect holiness.

This is a short, imperfect sketch of the true convert, the new man, who is born of the Spirit of God. I will conclude with two or three reflections on the whole.

I. The view we have had of this matter may serve to teach us what it is to be led by the Spirit of God, which is spoken of as a privilege common to all Christians. (Rom. viii. 14. Gal. v. 18.) It is not to be influenced and guided by any unaccountable impulses, or immediate suggestions to the mind of some new truth not contained in divine revelation, or of particular texts or passages of Scripture. But the Christian is led by the Spirit of God, by the Spirit's dwelling in him as a principle of new life and action, begetting, maintaining, and increasing a right taste and temper of mind, and thus preparing and disposing the heart to attend to, and discern, the truths revealed in God's word, or exercise itself in a wise and holy manner, in a view and sense of the truths contained in divine revelation. This is all the leading and influence the Christian wants from the Spirit of God. If he has a right taste and disposition of heart to a sufficient degree, he will want nothing further from the immediate influences of the divine Spirit in order to be led into all truth, and know and do his duty in every branch of it.

II. We may hence learn what persons are to inquire after in order to determine whether they are born of God or not; viz., what are the views and exercises of their own hearts, and what influence and effect these have in practice. By this, my hearers, you are to determine whether you have the Spirit of God or not, even by considering and finding out whether you have the discerning and exercises in which conversion consists, even all those holy exercises by which men do first turn from sin to God, and believe on the name of Jesus Christ, and in which they persevere in a holy life, which are in Scripture called the fruit of the Spirit.

Therefore, what has now been said in the description of conversion may be applied as matter of examination and trial

by all those who are desirous to know what their state is, whether they are born of God or not. They who are in any good degree engaged to get satisfaction in this interesting point, have been hearing with self-application, in this view. And I recommend it to all seriously, and with impartiality, to apply what has been said — so far as it appears to them to be agreeable to the Word of God — to themselves, by way of self-examination. And may the Lord give us understanding and discerning to determine this important question according to truth.

And have any of you good and satisfying evidence that you are born of God; give all the glory to his sovereign grace, and remember that this is but the beginning of something very great and glorious. "Think not that ye have already attained, or are already perfect, but follow after, that you may apprehend that for which you are apprehended of Christ Jesus. Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those which are before, press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby."

III. They who find themselves in an unregenerate state may most reasonably be concerned about themselves, in a view of the infinitely miserable condition they are in. Your case is shockingly dreadful. There is nothing good or right in your hearts; but you are perfectly corrupt and wicked, devoted to that which is your destruction. And you are wholly and perfectly to blame for all this, and, therefore, infinitely guilty and odious in God's sight, and most unworthy of the least pity and mercy from him; so that you are eternally undone, unless God shall exercise that distinguishing sovereign grace towards you which you have been always refusing and opposing, and which he may most justly refuse to grant.

Say not within yourselves, "We are utterly unable to help ourselves; we can do nothing towards our salvation; God must do all; why do you blame us? it signifies nothing for us to take any pains about the matter. If God is pleased to regenerate and save us, he will do it in his own time. Why, then, do you call upon us, and give us any trouble about the matter?" As well may the man who has turned rebel against his sovereign, and by this means has undone himself, and is apprehended and condemned to the most cruel torture and death, and is exposed to be executed every hour; at the same time, the prince whom he has offended and injured offers to pardon him, and put him into most happy circumstances, if he will only make his submission to him and be willing to be his friend

and servant, and is sending persons to treat with him about this matter, and urge him by all imaginable arguments and motives to accept of the kind and advantageous offer, so that all the difficulty of obtaining complete deliverance is his disposition to justify himself in his rebellion, and unwillingness to comply with the most reasonable and kind proposals, — I say, as well may such a one reply, "I cannot help myself; unless the prince give me a new heart, and incline me to accept of his offer as well as make it to me, the proposal will do me no good. I am, therefore, not to blame; I will not give myself the least trouble about it, let come what will. And as reasonably might a man use this language who has set his own house on fire, which is burning down over his head, and he sits easy and secure in the midst of it, or is busy throwing oil into the flame, and increasing the fire, while he is called upon and urged to escape for his life.

It is your indispensable duty, your highest interest, immediately to repent, believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and give yourselves up to God. Nothing can possibly be the least excuse for your neglecting it one minute; you have all the opportunity and advantage you can desire; and motives are set before you which are, I may say, infinitely weighty and forcible. And if divine, eternal vengeance should fall on your heads immediately, for the hardness of your hearts and continued rebellion, in these circumstances, God will be just, and you most justly miserable forever. And how soon this will be your case, you know not.

It is certain this will come upon you soon, unless you wake up and attend to your ease and fly to the only refuge. "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded." "Be afflicted and mourn, and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy into heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up. Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out. Believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and ye shall be saved."

SIX SERMONS,

SHOWING

HOW CHRISTIANS WORK OUT THEIR OWN SALVATION;

WITH A VIEW TO

PROMOTE THE KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE OF THOSE EXERCISES AND DUTIES IN WHICH REAL CHRISTIANITY CONSISTS, AND BY WHICH IT IS DISTINGUISHED FROM ALL COUNTERFEITS.

SIX SERMONS.*

HOW CHRISTIANS WORK OUT THEIR OWN SALVATION.

SERMON I.

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. — Phil. ii. 12, 13.

It is proposed to explain, illustrate, and improve this passage of Holy Scripture, with a view to promote the knowledge and practice of those exercises and duties in which real Christianity consists, and by which it is distinguished from all counterfeits.

In order to this, the following things must be attended to, and with care distinctly examined: —

I. What is meant by Christians working out their own salvation, and in what this work consists.

II. What is meant by doing this with fear and trembling.

III. What is to be understood by God's working in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

IV. Wherein, and in what respects, this affords a reason and motive to enforce the foregoing exhortation, expressed by the particle *for*, by which the sentence is introduced — "*For* it is God which worketh in you," etc.

V. Improve the subject to practical purposes.

I. We are to consider and show what is intended and implied in Christians working out their own salvation. For it must be observed and kept in mind, while attending to this subject, that the apostle is here — and in the whole of this epistle — addressing none but those whom he considers to be real Christians, "saints in Christ Jesus, (Phil. i. 1,) in whom God had begun a good work, which he would perform until the day of Jesus Christ, (verse 6;) who not only believed on Christ, but also suffered for his sake, (verse 29,) and had always obeyed Christ since they first believed." (Phil. ii. 12.)

* Written in the year 1798.

By salvation, we are to understand eternal life, which consists in deliverance from sin and evil, and being made perfectly holy and happy in the enjoyment and favor of God in his eternal kingdom. This is the hope which Christians are called by Christ to consider and pursue — the prize set up before them, for which they are commanded to run.

The Christian worketh out this as his own salvation, by avoiding and renouncing every thing which is in the way of obtaining it, and would effectually prevent it, if it were not given up and rejected; by surmounting and overcoming all the opposition and difficulties which would retard and obstruct him in his work; by his faithfully performing all those exercises, duties, and works which are included in the life of a Christian, and necessary in order to his salvation.

When a person is truly converted, and becomes a real Christian, a true disciple of Christ, he then begins this great work, which is not finished till he leaves this state of trial and passes into the unseen world by death. This is the most noble and important work, as well as the most difficult, in which any of the children of men can engage; and, as will appear before we have finished the subject, infinitely too great, and altogether impossible to be performed by fallen man, unless strengthened and carried through it by the power and grace of the mighty Redeemer.

This work of Christians is represented and described in the Scripture by a variety of expressions and metaphors, too many to be here particularly enumerated. It will be sufficient for the present purpose to mention the following: —

Our Savior speaks of this work in the following words: "And he said unto them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." The apostle Paul describes this work of a Christian by telling how he worked out his own salvation. "And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men. I follow after, that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness."

Jesus Christ represents this work by a warfare, in which the soldiers follow their general to battles and sieges, in which they resolutely press forward to conquest. He says, "The

kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." And this is repeatedly represented by the same thing in the Revelation, where he often promises salvation to him who overcometh.

The apostle Paul represents the work of a Christian by those who strive for the mastery over those who opposed and fought against them, and who ran in a race, in order to obtain a crown, in the midst of a number of competitors. "Know ye not that they who run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man who striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do this to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible." And he describes the same work in the following passages: "God will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honor, and immortality, eternal life. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. But thou, O man of God, flee these things, and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith; lay hold on eternal life."

But, in order to give a more particular and full description of this work, and show what is implied in it, that every one may be in some measure sensible of the greatness and difficulty of it, this subject requires yet further attention, and more clear illustration, from what is said of it in the Holy Scripture. This will be attempted under the following heads: —

First. In working out their own salvation, persons must avoid, forsake, and renounce every way or practice of known and allowed sin.

The Scripture teaches us that the allowed practice of any one way of known sin is not the way to heaven, but will certainly exclude men from salvation, though they should avoid all other ways of sinning, and whatever pains they may take in doing many things, and though they may make a high profession of godliness, and appear to have a great religious zeal. The apostle John says, "Whosoever abideth in him (that is, in Christ) sinneth not; whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. He that committeth sin is of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin." He does not mean that he does in no sense sin, and is perfectly free from all sin; for this would be a direct contradiction to what he had before asserted, viz., "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." By sinning and committing sin is therefore meant, living in the allowed prac-

tice of any known sin, or omission of any known duty. "They who are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts." The gospel teaches them to deny *all* ungodliness, and *every* worldly lust, as the only way to obtain salvation. They who are working out their own salvation "are undefiled in their way, they do no iniquity, and have respect to *all* God's commandments."

They must not only avoid all grossly sinful actions, and live what is called a sober and regular life, but they must so govern their tongues as carefully to avoid every sinful and even idle word. The command is, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers." (Eph. iv. 29.) And it is declared by the highest authority, that "for every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." (Matt. xii. 36.) And an apostle says, "If any man seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, this man's religion is vain." (Jam. i. 26.)

And they must watch against, avoid, and suppress all sinful, vain, and idle thoughts and imaginations in their own hearts. They must keep their hearts with all diligence, and not suffer any vain thoughts to lodge within them. They must oppose, fight against, and mortify every lust, every sinful motion, disposition or inclination in their heart, and not indulge any vain imaginations. The heart is the seat and fountain of every thing which is sinful. Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, and every sin which is brought forth into practice in words and actions. All moral evil, which is or has been in the world, originates in the heart. The Christian, therefore, has a constant, great, and difficult work to do in keeping his own heart, in watching against and striving to suppress every thought and motion which is contrary to the holy law of God, which has a primary respect to the heart, and, by requiring every thought and exercise of it to be holy, forbids every motion and thought which is not conformable to this holy law.

Under this head it will be needful to be more particular.

1. All selfish, covetous thoughts and affections must be opposed and suppressed. A selfish disposition, and all selfish thoughts, are covetousness, in the most proper and extensive sense of the word. And this disposition of the heart is the root and source of all sin, or of every thing wrong in the hearts and lives of men, or of all that is forbidden in the law of God. Therefore, St. Paul speaks of covetousness as comprehending all sin, which is forbidden in the law of God, in the following words: "I had not known sin but by the law:

for I had not known lust except the law had said, *Thou shalt not covet.*" (Rom. vii. 7.) It hence appears that a covetous spirit is directly opposed to what the law of God requires; and this, with the fruits of it, is all that is forbidden. Selfishness seeks her own wholly, and nothing else; and, therefore, is directly contrary to that holy, disinterested, benevolent love which the law of God requires, and which the apostle says "seeketh not her own." Man is naturally wholly under the power of this selfishness in all his thoughts and actions; and the Christian has as much of this in his heart as he has of sin, and to be delivered from every degree of selfish thoughts and affections will complete his salvation. Therefore, in working out his own salvation, he must seek deliverance from this giant, — selfishness, — and watch and oppose all the motions of it, which will intrude itself and mix with every thought and exercise of the heart, and strive for the dominion, and that in a secret and unperceived way, putting on the appearance of benevolence and goodness, not to be discovered and detected but by the discerning mind, which is constantly on the watch against it.

This selfishness implies all other evil thoughts, as it is the root of all sin, as has been observed; but as these evil thoughts are ranked under different names, — as they respect diverse objects, and produce a variety of dissimilar actions, — it is proper to consider them under distinct heads, according to their particular names, in order to give a more clear and full view of the thoughts and affections which the Christian must oppose and mortify, in order to work out his own salvation.

2. Christians must watch against and oppose all proud thoughts, or the pride of their own hearts, would they work out their own salvation. Pride is selfishness, or a fruit of it, which consists in a disposition to exalt self, and induces persons to think more highly of themselves than they ought to think. Against such thoughts the apostle Paul cautions Christians, and commands them to suppress and extinguish them. "I say to every man who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think." (Rom. xii. 3.) Our Savior frequently inculcated the necessity of mortifying pride, and putting on humility, in order to be saved. He repeatedly said that he who exalteth himself shall be abased, and he who humbleth himself shall be exalted. The apostles commanded men to humble themselves in the sight of God, as the only way to favor, and directed Christians to be clothed with humility.

Fallen man is naturally under the dominion of selfishness and pride. He is exceeding proud, by which all his thoughts,

words, and actions are governed, even when he puts on the appearance and pretence of humility. This his pride is most unreasonable, and the source of constant unhappiness; while there is the highest reason for the deepest humiliation, in a view and sense of the infinite odiousness of his character and conduct, and his unspeakable guilt and misery, being the object of the high displeasure and awful curse of his Maker. But it is always true, that the more reason men have for humility, and the more unreasonable their pride is, their pride is proportionably greater, and their hearts are more strongly opposed to humbling themselves. It is the nature of pride to hide itself from the person who has it, and he who has the most of it is the farthest from being sensible that he has any pride. And he only sees his own pride in any degree of true light in whose heart the power of it is so far broken as to exercise a degree of humility, which is true of every Christian. And even he is far from seeing the whole of his pride, and it often deceives him. It dwells in a great measure unseen in his heart, and it mixes itself with all his thoughts, and is gratified in words and actions, while it is not directly perceived, and is called, it may be, by some good name, and even looked upon to be real humility.

Pride has different objects, and supports and exercises itself in ways and by means innumerable. It is exercised towards God, so far as he comes into view, in mean, degrading thoughts of the Most High, and high and exalting thoughts of self; in haughty stubbornness to his authority, and disobedience to his law; in setting a high value on his own exercises, which he calls religious, so as to be confident they are highly pleasing to his Maker. It is exercised, as it respects men and himself, in a manner and ways too many to be enumerated here.

The gospel is levelled directly against the pride of man, and is calculated to exalt God and abase man; so that none but those who humble themselves in the sight of the Lord can approve of the way of salvation by Christ, or go one step in it. Every true Christian has thus humbled himself, so that the dominion of pride is broken in his heart. He has come to Christ, and taken his yoke upon himself, and learnt of him who is meek and lowly in heart, and walks humbly with God, and before men, in a view and sense of his own vile, odious character, his unworthiness, littleness, and ill desert before God, and his absolute dependence on him, of whom he has the highest, most exalted, and honorable thoughts. He delights to abase himself and exalt the Lord, trusting wholly to the atonement and righteousness of the Redeemer for pardon

and acceptance with God. But the Christian is far from deliverance from all pride. He has a degree of true humility, and in the light of this discovers his own pride as he never did before, which appears to him to be exceedingly odious; and the many instances of the exercise of it which he sees in his own heart and practice are made the occasion of promoting his humility, and of humbling him in his own eyes; and it requires constant watchfulness and exertion of a Christian to fight against, suppress, and mortify the pride of his own heart, in which he is working out his own salvation; for he cannot be saved in any other way, nor until all his pride be slain, and he is completely delivered from it.

All this is illustrated in the instance of king Hezekiah. He was a good man, and had been truly humbled, and resolved to walk softly and humbly all his days; but on a certain occasion he was led astray by his own pride and vanity of mind, which was not perceived by him in the time of his gratifying it. His sinful heart deceived him, and was lifted up in pride; but when this was discovered to him, he humbled himself for the pride of his heart, as it proved the occasion of his seeing more clearly than before all that was in his depraved heart. (See 2 Chron. xxxii. 25, 26, 31. Isa. xxxviii. 15.)

3. The Christian, in working out his own salvation, has to watch against all anger, wrath, bitterness, envy, and malevolence, even in the thoughts and motions of his heart. All these are implied in selfishness and pride, and are the genuine offspring and fruit of those evil dispositions, which, being indulged and gratified, produce all the angry clamors, contentions, fightings, wars, murders, and the various kinds of injuries, unrighteousness, and oppositions which take place among mankind. The Christian, from the remaining depravity of his heart, and the many, various, and daily temptations, injuries, and provocations, is in constant danger of having some or all of these evil thoughts and motions rise in his heart, and of indulging them in a sinful degree. He must, therefore, keep up a continual watch and fight against all these; constantly endeavoring to guard himself against them, that he may avoid or suppress them in their first motions, and prevent their breaking forth into words and actions; and without this he cannot work out his own salvation. In order to be saved, he must mortify all these, and endeavor to cultivate an unruffled, calm, patient, meek, and quiet spirit, and live in the exercise of that benevolence of heart which is contrary to anger, wrath, envy, and malice, and will suppress and root them out. The apostle James, therefore, says to professing Christians, "If ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against

the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish." (James iii. 14, 15.) And the apostle Paul says to such, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice." (Eph. iv. 31.)

4. Would Christians work out their own salvation, they must not indulge, but avoid and suppress, a worldly disposition and affections. All men are naturally of the earth, and earthly. They love the world, and seek a worldly good as their portion; they set their hearts and affections on the things of this world; they speak of the world, and, therefore, think much of it, and take their greatest and only pleasure in the pursuits and enjoyments of this world. The Christian is no longer of this world, but has renounced it as his portion, and chosen that which is infinitely better. But as he has still a degree of a worldly disposition, and is surrounded with worldly objects, and must have much concern with them, they are constantly courting his affection; he is continually in danger of being led astray, and setting his affection on things on the earth. It therefore requires constant care, watchfulness, and exertion in order to guard against, and suppress and mortify, all worldly affection, in the exercise of that faith which overcometh the world, and leads the soul to set its whole affection on things which are above, and not on things on the earth, and to keep the heart from a sinful love of the world and the things of the world. Salvation is to be obtained in no other way but this, by which Christians are more and more weaned from this world, and have their conversation in heaven. The cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the pleasures of this life, being indulged, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful. Therefore, the Christian, in working out his own salvation, must follow the direction of Jesus Christ, who said to his disciples, "Take heed to yourselves, watch and pray always, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life." (Luke xxi. 34, 36.)

5. The Christian's working out his own salvation implies a keeping in subjection and mortifying all inordinate bodily sensual appetites and lusts. These appetites are given to men to answer good and important purposes while in the body in this world; but become a temptation to innumerable indulgences, which are hurtful and criminal, and are inconsistent with the gospel salvation, for they who live after the flesh shall die. In this respect, therefore, every Christian must crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts, and mortify their members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness,

inordinate affection, and evil concupiscence. They must keep under their bodies, and bring them into subjection, as the only way to escape destruction. They must avoid the practice of gluttony, rioting, and drunkenness, and all chambering and wantonness; and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof; but purge themselves from all these, that they may be vessels unto honor, sanctified and meet for their Master's use, knowing that their bodies are temples of the Holy Ghost.

Thus, to keep the body under, and regulate and govern all the inclinations and appetites of it, and occasioned by it, requires great and constant care and watchfulness, and strong resolution and fortitude of mind, and is no small part of the work of a Christian.

6. The Christian cannot work out his own salvation unless he crosses and strives against an indolent, slothful disposition, which is natural to man, and prevalent in him with respect to all those things and actions which respect his salvation, and are necessary in order to it. Hence have been invented innumerable excuses and pleas in favor of sitting still and neglecting those exertions and duties which are necessary to be performed in order to salvation, which are too many to be mentioned here. Christians are exposed to be infected and retarded in their work by giving way to this slothful disposition, which is most contrary to the work they have to do. This requires their whole time and constant, zealous exertions, in which they must not be slothful, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. The Christian must, therefore, improve every opportunity, and all his advantages, diligently working while his day lasts. To sit still in indolence and sloth, is really to go backwards. In doing this work, the Christian must do as the apostle Paul did; he attended to this one business; forgetting those things which were behind, i. e., his former indolence in, and deviations from, the way of truth, he reached forth to those things which were before; he pressed toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

7. The work of a Christian consists much in watching and guarding against, suppressing and overcoming, the unbelief of his heart and all unbelieving thoughts.

Faith is necessary to salvation; and they who are saved live by faith, and persevere in believing to the saving of their souls. The Israelites were excluded from entering into the land of Canaan by their unbelief; and the Scripture teaches us that unbelief under the gospel will as effectually exclude men from heaven. "He who believeth not shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him, and he shall be damned."

Believing and unbelief, as it respects divine revelation or the gospel, do not mean merely the speculative judgment or conclusion of mind respecting the truth or falsehood of the gospel, or of any particular doctrines or facts which relate to invisible things. Two persons may be convinced in their judgment that there is good evidence that the gospel is from Heaven, and agree in their speculative sentiments in the doctrines which are revealed; and yet one of them may be a true believer in the scriptural sense of believing, and the other an unbeliever. This will be according to the disposition and exercises of their hearts, with respect to the gospel and the truths which it contains. If the heart of one of them have no relish of these truths, and love of them, but dislikes and is displeased with them, so that they are not cordially embraced as good and excellent, he has no true discerning respecting them, and does not see them to be what they really are, and is not a believer, in the Scripture and proper sense of believing. The other has such a taste and disposition of mind that he relishes these truths, and receives them with cordial approbation and love. He sees them in a light of which the other has no apprehension or idea, and he feels them to be great and important realities, true, excellent, and good; and they have such an influence and power on his heart as to excite strong affections, and govern him in all his exercises and conduct. This is a true believer. His faith is as different from that of the former as light is from darkness — as powerful sensibility of heart, with strong exercises of affection and love, are from insensibility and hardness of heart, and real dislike of the truth, and aversion from it.

True faith, or a real belief of the truths of the gospel, is of a moral nature, and, therefore, has its foundation and seat in the heart; so that exercise of heart is necessarily implied in it, and essential to it; for every thing of a moral nature belongs to the heart, and that in which no disposition or exercise of the heart is implied has nothing of a moral nature, and is neither good nor evil in a moral sense, i. e., neither virtue nor vice, which is true of every thing in the mind which consists in mere speculation. Therefore, we find that believing and unbelief, as they respect the gospel, are represented in Scripture as belonging to the heart, and an exercise of that. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God."

It appears from the passage of Scripture last mentioned,

not only that unbelief belongs to the heart, and, being seated there, is moral evil, but that professing Christians are so exposed to the influence of an unbelieving heart, that it concerns them to take heed to themselves, and be on their watch and guard against the prevalency of this evil in their hearts. And, indeed, all true Christians have as much of this unbelief in their hearts as they have of moral depravity or sin. Their faith is comparatively small, and as a grain of mustard seed. It does exist, and increases so far as their hearts are purified and they grow in grace. Yet they are more sensible of the awful degree of unbelief in their hearts than any other persons are or can be, and see the evil nature and hatefulness of it.

This unbelief does not consist so much in speculatively questioning the truth of divine revelation, and doubting of the truths contained in it, as in the want of sensibly feeling these truths in their reality, excellence, and importance, and not being properly affected with them. All this is unbelief, which no conviction which is merely speculative, or any light and evidence which can be offered by any external means and revelation or instructions, will remove, as it is properly hardness of heart. But it may, and often does, prejudice and blind the speculative understanding, so as at least to weaken the evidence of truth in speculation, and occasion speculative doubts about it, and is the cause of all that unbelief in speculation which takes place in the Christian world; this being not for want of external light and matter of conviction, but from the blindness and moral disorders of the heart.

The true Christian is sensible of this, and that he has that insensibility of heart to divine truth, and that darkness and blindness, which is not owing to any want of light and evidence which is set before him, but to the stupidity, hardness, and moral depravity of his heart, which will resist the greatest light and matter of conviction that can be set before him, and the strongest mere speculative conviction of his judgment, and would lead to renounce in speculation all the evidence of the truth of divine revelation, were he given up of God to the power and prevalence of a reprobate mind; and that it is to be ascribed to divine restraints, or to the grace of God shining in his heart and giving him the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, that he has any degree of true faith, and has not abandoned himself to total infidelity.

His remaining unbelief appears to him especially, at times, to be so great and overbearing that it is very grievous, and, as a heavy burden, sinks him down, as an unspeakable calamity, and exceeding criminal. Against this he has to watch, strive,

and pray continually, and he can work out his salvation in no other way. His constant petition is, "Lord, deliver me from this evil heart of unbelief. Lord, I do believe; help thou my unbelief, and increase my faith. Give me that faith which is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen. May I never draw back to perdition, but believe to the saving of my soul."

8. The Christian cannot work out his own salvation without resisting the devil, by watching against and opposing his influence and the evil thoughts suggested by him.

The devil works in the hearts of men by the lusts, depraved propensities, and evil thoughts which have been mentioned. He is represented in Scripture as taking the advantage of the depravity of man to suggest evil thoughts, and excite and strengthen the lusts of the heart, and to blind the minds of all them who do not believe; to watch and exert all his cunning to deceive and destroy them. Unregenerate, wicked persons are represented to be wholly under his power, in whom he powerfully worketh, they being in his snare, and led captive by him at his will. And in order to persons being converted and becoming Christians, this strong enemy must be dispossessed of their hearts by Christ, and they turned from the power of Satan unto God. And though Christians are so far delivered from the power of the devil, and out of his reach, that he cannot destroy or really hurt them in the end, and he who is born of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not, — that is, is not able to destroy or hurt them, by leading them to sin the sin unto death, or to live in a course of sin, — yet they are not out of the reach of his temptations and assaults, so long as they are sanctified but in part, and live in this state of imperfection and depravity. Satan provoked king David to number the people; and our Savior said to Peter, "Behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat." The apostle Paul was attended with a temptation which was the messenger of Satan to buffet him. And even Jesus Christ, who had no depravity to give the devil an advantage, was assaulted and tempted by him. The apostle Peter directs Christians to consider the devil as their adversary, as a roaring lion, walking about seeking whom he may devour. The apostle Paul, speaking in the name of all Christians, says, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places;" and directs Christians to take to themselves the whole armor of God, that they may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil; and goes on to

address them in the following words: "Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above (or over) all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." (Eph. vi. 10, 18.)

In these words great and constant work is prescribed to Christians in resisting the devil, and standing their ground against all his wiles and assaults — a conflict too great and mighty for all but those who are strong in the Lord and in the power of his might, yet necessary in working out their own salvation. The apostles James and Peter exhort Christians to this same work in the words following: "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour; whom resist steadfast in the faith."

There are some who profess to receive the Bible as a revelation from God, who doubt whether there be any devil, or invisible spirits, who are enemies to Christ, and seek the destruction of men. But surely they must be very inattentive to the Bible who can doubt of this. The real Christian finds the truth of this so abundantly asserted, that he cannot doubt it; and his own experience, if properly attended to, will confirm him in this. He will find many motions and suggestions in his own mind, which, from the kind of them, and the manner in which they take place, are evidently from the agency of Satan; and he is warranted from Scripture to consider the devil as having a hand and agency in all the foolish imaginations, evil thoughts and motions of his heart, and in all sin which he sees in others, especially their opposition to Christ and the gospel, and unrighteousness and violence towards men; for he is deceiving the whole world, and works in all the children of disobedience, and is attempting to stir up all the corruption which is in the hearts of good men. Therefore, while Christians are watching against and opposing all their own evil propensities, and acting against, and endeavoring to suppress and counteract, the sinful courses of others, they are really resisting the devil, while they consider themselves and others as criminal for every evil motion in their hearts, and all wrong conduct, as if there were no devil to tempt them.

However great, difficult, and of long continuance this work

of resisting the devil is, every Christian must go through it, and overcome, in order to obtain heaven. The Christian is in himself wholly unequal to it, but by Christ strengthening him he may go through it all. The Christian must do the work; while in order to it he must be strengthened by the power and grace of Christ, by which he becomes strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. The Christian has no reason to desire that Christ should take this work out of his hands, and resist and conquer the devil and his lusts without the ageney of the Christian; but ought to consider it as a great privilege to be obliged to do the work himself, and conquer, in the strength and power of the Redeemer.

SERMON II.

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. — PHIL. ii. 12, 13.

IT has been attempted to show in the preceding discourse, though in an imperfect, defective manner and degree, what the Christian has to oppose, suppress, mortify, and overcome, in working out his own salvation. This may be called the negative part of his work, consisting in renouncing and departing from evil, and is all comprehended in the apostolic injunction: "That ye put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts." (Eph. iv. 22.)

SECOND. We come now to consider the positive part of that work, in doing which Christians work out their own salvation, which is summarily expressed in the following words: "And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

This implies much, and consists in a constant, careful endeavor to conform to, and obey, the divine commands in heart and life, to live soberly, righteously, and godly in all things to the end of life. This may be divided into two branches, viz., the duties of which God is the more direct object, and those which more immediately respect man.

To God they owe their whole selves, and all they can do. They must love him with all their heart, soul, strength, and mind. This implies a variety of strong, constant exercises of heart towards him, as he is revealed in three persons, the Fa-

ther, Son, and Holy Ghost; especially as he has appeared God manifest in the flesh, in the character of the Son of God and Savior of the world, exhibited in his words and works of obedience and suffering, his death, resurrection from the dead, ascension to heaven, and reigning gloriously there, and in his revealed future designs and works.

They must believe in God and in Jesus Christ, that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them who diligently seek him. They must attend to, believe, and realize his being and whole character as he is revealed in the Bible, with all the important and leading truths which are contained in it, setting God always before their eyes, and trusting in Christ for pardon and complete redemption, which implies all they want or can desire, diligently seeking the divine favor through him, or for his sake. Thus they must live a life of faith on the Son of God, desiring to be found in him, not having their own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith; heartily desiring and seeking his Spirit to dwell in them, and form their hearts to every Christian exercise and duty, and doing all in the name of Christ, in the exercise of a cordial love of his whole character, and pleasing approbation of the way of salvation of sinners which is revealed in the gospel.

They must be heartily devoted to the glory of God, to his honor, interest, and kingdom, as the supreme object of their desire and affection. This is necessarily implied in supreme love to him, in which they give themselves wholly away to him in the exercise of the most friendly, benevolent love, rejoicing in his being, felicity, and glory. This is, in a true and in the highest sense, disinterested affection, and necessarily excludes all selfishness, so far as it takes place, as it cannot proceed from self-love as the ground of it, but is directly contrary to it, as it gives up all selfish affection and interest for an infinitely greater, more worthy, and important interest and object; making the being of God, his interest, and honor their supreme interest, the object of their highest regard and ultimate end, to which all other beings and interests are wholly subordinated, as not worthy any regard, but to be rejected when they come in competition with the honor and interest of this infinitely great, worthy, and glorious Being. By this disposition and exercise of heart alone do they comply with the apostolic command: "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. And that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again." And thus they enter upon and live a life of true and real self-denial.

The more Christians are swallowed up in views of the glory of God, and their hearts desire and rejoice in the unchangeable and eternal glory and felicity of the infinite Being, as the object of their whole pursuit, interest, and happiness, — which does not consist, in the least degree, in selfish affection, — the more is their own salvation promoted, and the greater is their enjoyment, and the nearer do they get to heaven. The person who, under the influence of self-love, or selfishness, seeks his own personal interest, honor, and felicity, supremely — and this is the unchangeable nature of every degree of self-love — exerts the whole strength of his soul in direct opposition to the Christian affection now described; and, as he regards himself supremely, he subordinates the being, felicity, and glory of God, that he may answer his own selfish ends thereby, and cares nothing for the former, aside from his own supposed personal interest, or any further than the latter may be promoted thereby. Such an affection is the strongest contradiction to all truth, and does love and make a lie in the highest and most emphatical sense. If the smallest pebble, or one grain of sand, should be selected and preferred to the whole material world, comprehending this earth, the sun, moon, and all the stars, and no regard be paid to the existence, order, and beauty of the whole, any further than they relate to that single grain, and contribute to support and favor that infinitely small portion of the material world, this would not be more unreasonable and contrary to the truth; yea, it would be infinitely less so than for one individual person to pay a supreme regard to himself, and subordinate the infinite Being to his own private, personal interest and happiness, who is so great, worthy, and glorious, that there is infinitely less proportion between such individual and him than there is between the least grain of sand and the whole material creation.

There are too many professing Christians who embrace and pursue a scheme of practical religion which is as unreasonable, contrary to truth, and absurd, as this appears to be. They say that it is impossible for men to love God so long as they consider him to be displeased with them, and think he does not love them; that he must first manifest to them that he is their friend, and loves them, and they must believe it before they can love him; that in this way they were brought to love God, and to be reconciled to his character and law and to all the truths and duties of Christianity; they were brought first to see and believe that God loved them, and on this foundation only they first began to love him, and continue to be friendly to him. Thus they declare that all their regard and

love to God is nothing but self-love, for they love him only because he is a friend to them, and will answer their own selfish ends, and promote their own personal, selfish interest, and subordinate their Maker and all his interest to their own beloved selves. Their religion is all built on an impossible supposition, viz., that they had evidence that God loved them before they had any love to him, and while they were his enemies; which is directly contrary to Scripture and reason. But if this were not contrary to Scripture, and a mere delusion, their love to God is as far from true friendship to him as darkness is from light; for it is nothing but self-love at second hand, and is an affection which our Savior condemns as that which the most wicked man and greatest enemy of God may have. He says, "If ye love them who love you," (i. e., merely because they love you,) "what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same?"

The words of the apostle John are appealed to as a support of this scheme of religion: "We love him because he first loved us." But these words are entirely misunderstood by them, and perverted to a most injurious and fatal purpose. The apostle does not say, "We love God because we first believed he loved us;" in which sense they take the words, in order to answer their purpose. The natural and plain meaning of the words, and which is pointed out by the context, is this: "God loved us first, and gave his Son to die for us; and he has given us a heart to love him, by which we have been born of God: this is the cause of our loving God; for if he had not thus first loved us, while we were enemies, and caused us to be born again by his Spirit, we should not have loved him; for he who is not born of God will not exercise any true love to him, though he should love them, and tell them he did so by a particular revelation. Therefore, they who love God only upon this selfish ground, and build all their religion upon it, however zealous they may be, and however much they may do, are not working out their own salvation, but the contrary, and never will obtain it."

The importance of this point, and the delusion with which so many are deceived, it is to be feared to their own ruin, is thought to be a sufficient reason for this seeming digression.

This supreme love to God, and dedication to him, — living not unto themselves, but to and for him, — implies a hearty, sensible acknowledgment of him in all their ways, and in all events which take place, seeing his hand in them all, and heartily submitting to him, and acquiescing in his governing providence, and rejoicing that the Lord reigns without control,

ordering every thing, and every circumstance, from the greatest to the least, in the exercise of infinite power, wisdom, rectitude, and goodness.

This pious disposition, and these exercises of heart towards God, are to be expressed and acted out in all proper ways and conduct. This requires much care, labor, and self-denial, and a strong resolution, and much fortitude of mind. The Christian must confess Christ before men, — must speak for him and in his cause, whenever there is a proper opportunity, — and must publicly profess his belief in him, and cordial subjection to him, in obedience to all his commands, and attendance upon all his institutions. He must pay a strict and conscientious regard to the Sabbath, carefully avoiding all those things which tend to interrupt his attendance on the religious duties of that day, devoting the whole time, as much as may be, to the exercises of religion, constantly attending on public worship, with seriousness and devotion. He must attend much to the Bible, daily reading and meditating upon it, that he may grow in his acquaintance with it, and be entertained and directed by it, "as a lamp to his feet, and a light to his path." Thus "his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night."

He will attend devoutly on the Lord's supper whenever he has opportunity, and be careful not to neglect the important preparatory duties of self-examination, prayer, etc. He is a friend to family religion, and, if the head of a family, will practise daily devotion in it, in attending to the Word of God and prayer, taking particular care that the whole family attend in a serious and orderly manner, and that they are all instructed in things of religion, and under good regulation and government. And he will be careful that no worldly business or concern interrupt the religious duties of the family. He must also practise, and constantly maintain, secret prayer. A Christian cannot maintain his spiritual life, activity, and comfort in the omission of closet duties, and cannot work out his own salvation without constantly entering into his closet, agreeably to the direction of Christ, and being much in devotion there. The prayerless person is not in the way to heaven. Prayer comprehends not only petition for what persons want for themselves and others, but adoration, praise, and thanksgiving for divine beneficence to themselves and to others, together with humble confession of sin, unworthiness, and ill desert. The Christian will find abundant matter for prayer and devotion, or intercourse with God, every day and hour, and must, in some good measure, at least, act up to the apostolic direction — "Praying always with all prayer and supplication

in the Spirit; in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, make known his requests unto God," to whom he may have access at all times, through the great Mediator, with humble boldness and freedom.

And as the Christian has made a public profession of religion, and joined a particular Christian church, he is under covenant engagements to watch over his brethren and sisters, and assist in the exercise of discipline, agreeably to the directions of Christ, which requires great attention, care, and resolution, in order to be acquainted with the truth of facts, and judge and act, so far as he is called to it, agreeably to the truth and the dictates of Christian love, and so as shall be most for the honor of Christ and the good of every individual of the church. This is included in the exercise of piety towards God, as well as his duty to his fellow-Christians; and his love to God will induce him to speak and act, in all companies and on all occasions, for the honor of God, and so as to recommend Christianity to all, being constantly concerned that his conversation should be as becometh the gospel of Christ.

Another branch of practice by which Christians work out their own salvation consists in those duties which more immediately respect their fellow-men. These are all implied in loving their neighbor as themselves, or doing to others as they would that others should do unto them, and in expressing this love in all proper ways, in words and conduct.

They are careful and exact to do justice to all with whom they have any connection, and are conscientiously concerned and engaged not to injure any person either in their thoughts, words, or actions, in any of his interests, of worldly property or character, of body or soul; constantly watching against and opposing the many temptations and opportunities to do wrong to any of those with whom they have any concern, in the least instance or degree; taking diligent heed not to practise according to the many false maxims and examples of mankind, but making the Holy Scripture their constant rule in all their thoughts, words, and dealings with others.

And they are not only concerned and careful to do justice to all, but they love mercy, and wish and endeavor to do all the good they can unto all men, embracing all opportunities to promote their best interest, both temporal and eternal, whether they be friends or enemies. They must exercise a benevolent love to their worst enemies, whatever injuries they may have received from them; they must wish them well, do good to them, and pray for them in particular, while they are praying for all men; and if at any time they are convinced that they have injured any of their fellow-men, they must not

rest till they have made all the reparation or restitution which is in their power, whatever mortification, cost, and pains this may require.

They must be careful to speak and conduct towards all with becoming decency and respect, whether superiors, inferiors, or equals; and to set good examples before all, of humility, temperance, sobriety, meekness, and kindness; being ready to every good work, practising patience, forgiveness, and long-suffering, endeavoring to live in peace with all men, as far as shall be in their power. And to this end they must be careful to practise all those relative duties towards those who are in the nearest connection with them, whether husband, wife, parents, children, brethren, sisters, domesties, and particular relatives or friends; and they have particular and important duties to do towards their brethren and sisters of the church, of the household of faith, some of which have been mentioned under the preceding head. They must live in the exercise and expression of benevolence and kindness to them, being ready and careful to minister to the relief and comfort of their bodies, by giving them food and raiment, and affording them any help of which any of them shall stand in need, and by exercising and manifesting a particular concern and friendship for them, and complacency in them, in the exercise and practice of that brotherly love which is peculiar to Christians.

They must be diligent and faithful in their particular calling and business, striving to improve their time and talents to good purpose, so as to have a supply for their own bodily wants, and of theirs who depend in any measure on them, and so as to be able to give relief to all who stand in need, and so as to redeem time for religious exercises, and the improvement of their minds in all useful knowledge, which in their circumstances they shall have opportunity to acquire, diligently improving all their time in something really useful to themselves or to others, or to both.

Third. Christians in working out their own salvation must persevere in this work, which has been imperfectly described, to the end of life.

Christ said to the Jews who professed to believe on him, "If ye continue in my words, then are ye my disciples indeed," (John viii. 31;) which words imply that none are the true disciples of Christ but those who persevere in obedience to him to the end of life. They only who overcome, are faithful unto death, and endure to the end, shall be saved. (Matt. x. 22. Rev. ii. 7, 10.) "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him," (Heb. x. 38, 39,) and he draws back unto perdition.

Fourth. The Christian, in working out his own salvation, must increase and make progress in his labor and work, and daily do more and more. He must make advances in knowledge and skill in his business, and increase in zeal, engagedness, and activity.

When a Christian enters on his work, he may be compared to a youth who begins to work at some trade. By working, he continually increases in skill and ability to work; he daily makes advances in his work, and does more and more in a day, till he is perfect in his trade and business. So the Christian who is working out his own salvation not only continues and perseveres in his work, but his work increases on his hands, and he gains in skill and strength, in his engagedness and activity, and does and abounds more and more. Increase in grace and holiness is as necessary, in order to obtain salvation, as perseverance. It is essential to the nature of true grace to grow and increase in the exercise of it; so that it is as certain that he who does not make any advances in a holy life, and increase in his work, and abound more and more, is not in the way to heaven, and has no true grace, as it is of him who falls away and wholly ceases to work. "The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more to the perfect day." There is no way to heaven but this.

The apostle Paul tells the church at Philippi, to whom he gave the direction in the text, that in working out his own salvation he was striving to press forward, and go on in his Christian course, till he should arrive to perfection, not resting in any past or present attainments. "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." The apostles insist much on this, as the character and duty of Christians, that they increase and abound more and more in each Christian grace and in every good work. This will appear by the following quotations: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." To abound in the work of the Lord is to increase in working, and to do more and more. In this sense the word *abound* is frequently used, which will appear from the passages which will now be quoted: "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment." (Phil. i. 9.) "And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men. Furthermore, then, we beseech you,

brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and please God, so ye would abound more and more. Ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another; but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more." (1 Thes. iii. 12; iv. 1, 9, 10.) "That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." (Col. i. 10.) "For if these things" — i. e., the Christian graces which he had just mentioned — "be in you and abound, they shall make you that ye shall be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For if ye do these things, ye shall never fall. For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Beloved, beware lest ye, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness; but grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." (2 Pet. i. 8, 10, 11; iii. 17, 18.) In these words — abounding in every Christian grace, and growing in grace and in the knowledge of Christ — is represented the only sure way to escape falling into destruction and to enter into the kingdom of heaven. The same truth was inculcated by Christ: "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." According to this there are but two sorts of visible Christians, viz., they who are not real Christians, and, consequently, bear no fruit; and they who are true Christians, and are fruitful, being constantly purged so as to increase in their fruit, and bear more fruit the longer they live. And that this must be so is plain and certain, because for a man to work out his own salvation is to do that by which he is ripening, preparing, and becoming more meet for the kingdom of heaven; which he cannot do but by growing in grace, and becoming more and more holy, and going on towards perfection in holiness; and this is the same with abounding more and more in every good work.

This is the work and life of a Christian, a description of which has been now attempted, in order to show what is intended by his working out his own salvation. This attempt, though imperfect and defective, will serve to discover what this work is, according to the Holy Scriptures, in the most essential part of it, and that it is indeed a very great work, infinitely the greatest, most difficult, and important that any man ever engaged in and performed.

Some, it may be, will be ready to say, as the disciples of Christ said to their Lord, on a certain occasion, "Who, then,

can be saved?" If this be the work of a Christian, and the only way to work out our own salvation; if men must thus deny all ungodliness, and every worldly lust, and must live thus soberly, righteously, and godly in the world; if they must be so strict, careful, watchful, painful, and laborious in this work; if they have to oppose and conquer such numerous, crafty, and powerful enemies, and must deny themselves, and take up their cross daily; if they can have no respite, can never be released from this work, by night or by day, but must persevere in it to the end of life, — and not only so, but their work increases on their hands every day, so that the longer they work the more is required, and the more they do the more they have to do, — if this be the case with man, if this be the only way to heaven, who will ever get there? If there be any in the way to salvation, surely they are very few; the most are like to miss of it forever. And who can have courage to engage in such a work as this? and how is this consistent with the words of Christ: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest to your souls: for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light"?

A full answer to this is found in the reply of Christ to the question which his disciples put to him: "Who, then, can be saved?" "This is, indeed, impossible with men, but not with God; for with God all things are possible." Though man, in his fallen, depraved state, be altogether unequal to this work, and will never, of himself, do any thing to any purpose, yet, by the help of God, by his grace and assistance, he may do all this, and work out his own salvation, and he will find it to be not only possible, and that, by Christ strengthening him, he can do all these things, and more, but the most agreeable and pleasant work in which man can be employed. This is held forth in the text, which is to be further explained, and will be more particularly considered in the sequel.

But, before we pass to this, several observations will be made with regard to working out our own salvation, as it has been described, which may prevent any misunderstanding, and throw further light on the subject.

I. By Christians' working out their own salvation is not meant that by this they so recommend themselves to God, that out of regard to the worth and merit of their good works they obtain an interest in the divine promises, and a title to salvation. The declarations of Scripture are directly contrary to such a supposition. "By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God. Not of works; for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus

unto good works. Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Men are brought into a state of salvation, and an interest in the promises of the covenant of grace, and have a title to eternal life, by the first act which unites them to him, that is, by the first exercise of faith on him. They do not earn or merit salvation by their works, nor do they aim at or attempt this, or have the least desire of it. They are so far from this, that their first holy exercise implies a sense of their unworthiness and ill desert; and they come to Christ for salvation as a free gift to the infinitely unworthy and ill deserving, trusting in his merit and righteousness to recommend them to all that favor and salvation which they desire and seek after; and all this is expressed or implied in all they do in working out their own salvation. They are so far from offering any thing of their own as the price of their salvation, that all their working and exertions are implied in coming to Christ, and trusting in him for complete redemption, as a free, undeserved gift, to be obtained through him, without money or price; and all they do in working out their own salvation consists essentially in this, in coming to Christ for all, and receiving all from him, even strength, righteousness, and salvation, in a sense of their total unworthiness of the least good, and desert of infinite evil.

It is of importance that this point should be viewed in this scriptural light, and kept in mind, to prevent those dangerous mistakes into which many have fallen.

Moreover, real Christians not only have an interest in salvation by promise when they begin to work it out, but, if it were not so, all they do in working out their salvation is so far from meriting or deserving salvation, or any favor, that they continually deserve to be excluded from it forever and to perish; and by all they do they do not become less ill deserving than they were before they began to work, but more so. All they do is so defiled with sin, is so deficient, and comes so far short of what is their duty, that for this they deserve to be given up to evil, and perish, and must perish, after all, were it not for the merits of Christ, in whom they are accepted in all their holy exercises and works, and their sins are pardoned, and through his righteousness they receive the reward of eternal life. This every Christian feels constantly, and acknowledges to be true with regard to himself, while he is with the greatest care and diligence working out his own salvation.

II. Christians do not work out their own salvation in their own strength, but by the special and constant assistance and powerful influences of the Spirit of God, by which they are

made strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Christians are in themselves altogether unequal to this work, being nothing but weakness and insufficiency; it is infinitely too great and arduous for them; they depend entirely and constantly on the grace and assistance of God, in order to do any thing effectually towards it. This is abundantly declared in the Scripture. Christ tells his disciples, "Without me ye can do nothing." And he said to the apostle Paul, "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Paul, therefore, dared to say, "I can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth me. For when I am weak, then am I strong. By the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace, which was bestowed upon me, was not in vain, but I labored more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." According to our text, it is God who worketh in them both to will and to do this great work which is before them. Without his energy, and constant, effectual operation on their hearts, they would not take one step in this work, or put forth any act of will towards it. But this will be more particularly considered in further attending to this subject.

III. This work is as necessary to be done in order to salvation as it would be if men obtained a title to salvation by thus working, and merited it by their good works. Though men are not saved by or for their holiness, yet holiness is as necessary to salvation as if they were; for deliverance from sin, and turning from it, and the exercise of holiness is essential to salvation, as the latter can have no existence without the former. It is as necessary that men should be holy in order to salvation as it would be were they to obtain a title to it and merit it by their holiness and good works; for it still remains true, that without holiness no man shall see the Lord or enjoy salvation. But to be holy, and exercise holiness, is to work out salvation in the sense of the text, and as it has been now described.

The moral inability of man to exercise holiness, and go on to perfection in holiness of himself, does not make it in any degree less necessary that he should be holy in order to be happy, and, therefore, not the less necessary that in order to be holy men should be active and work; for that men should live a holy life, or be holy, without working, or the exercise of holiness, is a contradiction.

IV. Though men are morally unable to work out their own salvation of themselves, but depend on God for assistance and grace, by which he worketh in them both to will and to do it, yet it is not only as necessary they should do these works, but they are as much their own works and actions as if they did

them of themselves, without any assistance, and powerful, effectual influence from God. God's assisting men to do these works does not make them the less man's own exercises and works than if they did them without any assistance. Every act of any person's will or choice, and all the designed attendants and consequences of such a volition, are his own exercises and actions; and it is impossible it should be otherwise, whatever influences he is the subject of in order to his thus willing and acting. Whatever a man wills, and does in the execution of his will, are his own exercises of will, and his own actions, and cannot be otherwise; and to assert the contrary, is always an untruth and a palpable contradiction.

It would be needless to make this observation, were it not that some have been so thoughtless and absurd, however learned and judicious in other matters, as to say, that if God worketh in men to will and to do, so that their choice and doing is the effect of what God does work in them, then it is God who wills and does, and not man; and if there be any virtue or goodness in what is done, it is the virtue and goodness of God, and not man's. But this is manifestly most absurd, and contrary to the reason and common sense of mankind; for they feel and know that every thing which men will and do is their own choice and deed, and not of any other, and that whatever induced them thus to will and do, and that it is as much their own act and deed as if they had done it without any such influence. And if what they do be right and virtuous, it is as much their own virtue and goodness as it could be if they had done it without any influence or assistance from others.

Upon the whole, to conclude this head, it appears that Christians have a great work to do, which is absolutely necessary in order to be saved, in which they must be active, must will and do it. And this is to perfect holiness in the fear of God, and work out their own salvation with fear and trembling. And this is the work spoken of in the text, a description of which has been attempted in the preceding discourse; which may God bless to the benefit of all who shall give to it a proper attention. Amen.

SERMON III.

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. — Phil. ii. 12, 13.

In attending to these words, it has been attempted to consider and show what is intended by Christians' working out their own salvation. This has been endeavored in the preceding discourses. It is now proposed, —

II. To consider what is meant by their doing this "with fear and trembling."

It is of importance to observe here, and let it be kept in view, that this passage of Scripture cannot be understood, and the true sense of it given, unless the real meaning of these words be properly ascertained and fixed in our minds; for they are really the key by which alone the meaning of the whole passage is opened, and without which the true intent and force of these words of the apostle cannot be perceived. This, it is expected, will be made to appear before the subject is dismissed, and is a reason why these words should be examined with particular care and attention, that the true import of them may not be overlooked, and they be taken in a wrong sense, but the true meaning of them be known and fixed.

The drift and force of the exhortation of the apostle is not merely to work out their own salvation, but has a principal and chief respect to the manner of doing this, which is expressed in the words, "with fear and trembling." Therefore, in these words is contained an essential part of the exhortation; and to this part, which points out the manner and only way in which they could work out their own salvation, the following words do wholly refer, as an argument to enforce it: "*For* it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." This is a reason, not merely why they should work out their own salvation, but why they should do this with fear and trembling, as the only way in which it could be done. Whatever men may do, and however much and great pains and labor they may take in working out their salvation, yet, if they do not this with fear and trembling, they will fail of obtaining salvation. This points out the only way to heaven. But this will be more particularly considered and illustrated in the prosecution of this subject.

The following particulars will serve to lead to the true meaning of fear and trembling: —

1. These words must intend something which is right and

becoming all Christians at all times, while they are working out their own salvation. It is what is essential to all truly Christian grace and exercises, and belongs to the beauty and excellence of their character; and, as they cannot be real Christians and live as such without it, so the more they have of it, the better and more strong and excellent Christians they are. If this were not so, the apostle would not have exhorted them, and, consequently, all Christians, at all times, and in all ages, thus to work out their own salvation. It would be injurious and absurd to suppose that he exhorted to those exercises and that practice which are not virtuous and excellent, and becoming all Christians, at all times, as their indispensable duty, in which they are bound to excel, and cannot be practised to excess. This observation, of the truth of which none can doubt, will help to show what is not intended by fear and trembling here, viz., all those exercises which are wrong, or are a blemish and imperfection in the character of a Christian. These must all be excluded, and will lead to the observations following.

2. The apostle does not exhort Christians to work out their own salvation under the influence of a servile, slavish fear of God, in which no true love is implied, but is contrary to a spirit of love. This is sometimes meant by fear in the Scriptures, and is condemned as contrary to a Christian spirit of love and true obedience. This apostle says to Christians, "Ye have not received the Spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, of love, and of a sound mind." (Rom. viii. 15. 2 Tim. i. 7.*) He, therefore, certainly did not exhort Christians to exercise such fear in working out their salvation. The apostle John says there is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

3. By fear and trembling here is not meant a constant, trembling fear of falling away and perishing at last. This cannot be the meaning, because this is not the duty of all Christians, and cannot be considered as a Christian virtue, but rather an imperfection and at least a defect of grace. Christians are directed to make their calling and election sure. The apostle speaks of those Christians to whom he gave the exhortation under consideration as those of whom he was confident that God would carry on the work he had begun in them until the day of Jesus Christ; and how could he direct

* The word in the original, translated *fear*, (2 Tim. i. 7,) is *deilias*, which is not the word commonly used for fear; and the most proper meaning of it is *cowardice*.

them to tremble with fear of perishing, when he at the same time had told them he was confident that Christ would save them? Why might not they be as confident of their salvation as he was? He speaks in the language of assurance of his own salvation in this letter. He speaks of his own death as connected with his being with Christ; and he says of himself, with others, "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." And no doubt some, if not many, of the Christians at Philippi had a comfortable assurance of their interest in the covenant of grace, and, consequently, that they should be saved. It is certain that the apostle did not know that this was not true of them. It is, therefore, certain that he considered this exhortation to be applicable to the most assured Christian that was then on earth, or ever will live in this world, and pointed out their duty as much as of those who were in doubt whether they should be saved or not. The apostle himself, and every assured Christian, had as much of this fear and trembling as any Christian whatever; and it was as much his and their duty and privilege, and essential to their character, in which they would abound more and more as they advanced in the Christian life and excellent attainments.

The word *fear* is often used in Scripture in a sense which denotes that which is a virtue and real piety, and in this sense are fear and trembling used; and the fear of the Lord, or to fear God, commonly means the exercise of true piety. Of this all who read the Bible with attention are sensible.

From the foregoing observations, it evidently appears, that by fear and trembling in the text must be intended *Christian humility*, with all the natural and necessary attendants of it, consisting in a sense of their own depravity and guilt, or ill desert, and of their total moral impotence and insufficiency in themselves to work out their own salvation, or to will and do any thing towards it, with an entire and constant dependence on and trust in God the Savior for pardon and acceptance through his atonement, and the influences of his Spirit to give them moral discerning, strength, and ability to work out their own salvation, in a sense of his greatness, majesty, power, and sovereignty, who has mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth; and of their own littleness, vileness, and infinite unworthiness of the least favor; while they view destruction — which they deserve, and shall certainly fall into, unless they are rescued by the mighty power and sovereign grace of God — in all the horrors and dreadfulness of it; and the infinite greatness, worth, and importance of

that salvation which is given by Christ to all who believe and obey him.

That all this is implied in that humility and faith which is essential to the character of a Christian, and by which he lives and works out his own salvation, none can doubt who properly attends to the subject; and that the whole of this is implied and expressed in the words fear and trembling, is evident from the use of those words in other places, and on different occasions, and from what follows in the passage we are upon.

We find these words used three times, beside that in the text before us, by this apostle. He says to the Corinthians, "I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling." He seems here to set himself designedly in contrast with those whom he calls false apostles, who appeared proud and self-sufficient, and affected a great parade and show of their own abilities and accomplishments, and boasted great things. On the contrary, when he was with them, and God did great things among them by his ministry, in their conversion, he gloried not in himself, but in the Lord, and labored among them in fear and much trembling, in a pressing sense of his own weakness and insufficiency for the great work in which he was engaged; that he was nothing, and that God alone could give the increase and success desired. He expresses the same thing in the following words: "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God." When he speaks of the Corinthians receiving Titus with fear and trembling, the meaning is, that they received him in humility and lowliness of mind, in a sense of their own sinfulness and unworthiness, and readiness to receive instruction from him, sensible of their ignorance and need of being taught, in opposition to self-sufficiency and pride, undervaluing and despising him.

This same apostle says to servants, "Be obedient unto them who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling." None can reasonably suppose that servants are here commanded to act from a servile, slavish fear of their masters, doing all and obeying them out of fear of their rod; for this is not a commendable spirit in servants. By fear and trembling is evidently meant a spirit of humility and submission to the will of their masters; willing to take their own proper place; not setting up for themselves, but feeling their dependence upon their masters for all temporal support, realizing the evil consequence of a contrary spirit and conduct, of pride and self-sufficiency. And in Romans xi. 20, he uses the word *fear* to denote a Christian virtue, in opposition to pride and self-

confidence: "Well, because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high minded, but fear."

And that the meaning of fear and trembling in the text which has been given is the only true meaning, is evident from the words which immediately follow these: "*For* it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." This is given as the reason why they should work out their own salvation with fear and trembling. And this is a good reason why they should do this in a humbling sense of their own depravity, unworthiness, and moral inability to work out their own salvation, and continually maintain self-diffidence, in a sense of the greatness of the work, and their own insufficiency, and their entire dependence on God for his powerful influence on their hearts, in order to their willing and doing, and taking one step in their Christian course. But if these words are not taken in this sense, the propriety and force of the argument cannot be discerned, and is lost. But this is to be more fully considered under another head.

Having given a summary of the meaning of fear and trembling in the text, in order more fully to elucidate this point it will be proper, if not necessary, particularly to show what is implied in this general account, which may be done under the following heads: —

1. Fear and trembling implies a trembling conviction and sense of their own weakness, and total insufficiency in themselves to work out their own salvation, while they have some true view of the greatness, difficulty, importance, and necessity of the work, and that it must be done by them, being most reasonable, and their indispensable duty.

This self-diffidence every Christian feels and constantly exercises in disclaiming all moral power and ability to do any thing towards his salvation, if left to himself, and is necessarily implied in that humility denoted by fear and trembling.

2. This is attended with a thorough conviction and sensible acknowledgment that this their weakness and utter insufficiency is wholly their own fault; that it consists in their moral depravity, and the inexcusable wickedness of their own hearts. This conviction and view of themselves strikes death to their pride, and is an essential ingredient in Christian humility, and in fear and trembling.

3. Consequently, fear and trembling includes in it an affecting conviction of their own unworthiness and ill desert; that they are utterly unworthy of salvation, and of that assistance and grace by which alone they can obtain it, and deserve to be left of God to fall into destruction, which would certainly be the case, in a moment, if God should deal with them ac-

cording to their folly and crimes, and withhold from them that assistance and sovereign goodness which they are constantly forfeiting, and pour that evil on their heads which they are provoking him to inflict; that they are, therefore, in the hands of a sovereign God, who has mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. This view and sense of the truth will not be in the least removed or abated by the strongest well-grounded hope and confidence that this sovereign God has had mercy on them; and, therefore, does not in any degree exclude the humility, the fear and trembling, implied in a real and constant conviction of these truths.

4. Fear and trembling implies a fearful and trembling sense of the infinite and amazing dreadfulness of endless destruction, which the Christian considers and dreads as his certain portion, if he should have his desert, and not be rescued and saved from it by the constant exertion of the mighty power and sovereign grace of Jesus Christ. The strongest Christian hope and assurance that they have a divine promise that they shall escape this evil, and be kept by the mighty power of Christ through faith unto salvation, will not remove or abate this awful view of destruction; but they who have the highest well-grounded confidence of their salvation, will have the greatest sense of the evil implied in perishing forever.

5. A belief and sense of the infinite greatness, power, and terrible majesty of God, and a correspondent conviction of their own littleness and nothingness in his sight, impressing an awe of his displeasure and dread of sinning against him, is implied in fear and trembling. This sense and feeling will increase as Christians grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, whatever evidence and assurance they may have of the favor and love of God.

6. The Christian works out his own salvation with fear and trembling while he constantly views and feels the dangers with which he is surrounded, by which he is liable to fall and perish, and against which he has no strength and security in himself; that he is always surrounded by innumerable hosts of invisible, subtle, potent enemies, who are seeking his eternal ruin, and doing all they can to prevent his salvation, while he has no more power or skill in himself to resist or escape their rage, and destruction by them, than an infant has to conquer a roaring lion.

This is the representation which Christ himself gives of the state and circumstances of a Christian while in this world. He speaks to every Christian of which his church is composed in the following language: "Look unto me from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards." (Solomon's Song,

iv. 8.) He speaks to his church, and to every believer of which it is composed, as dwelling among lions, even in their dens, continually exposed to be devoured by them; and in the midst of leopards, beasts of prey, who conceal themselves in thickets and on trees, from which they suddenly dart themselves, and seize and devour men as they pass; denoting that they are in such a dangerous state in this world, and continually exposed to be destroyed by powerful, invisible enemies, which is fully represented by persons lying in the dens of hungry, devouring lions, or on mountains haunted by leopards, every moment exposed to be destroyed by them, having nothing to defend themselves from them. He calls to them to look to him as their only refuge and deliverer, letting them know their dangerous, helpless situation, and that in him alone their help is found.

7. This is attended with a constant and increasing view and sense of the dangerous enemies which they have within themselves, consisting in their moral depravity and evil propensities; that if Christ should leave them to themselves, they should immediately turn his enemies, and join with the devil, and be on his side and espouse his cause in opposition to Jesus Christ, and finally fall with him into eternal destruction.

8. Fear and trembling is not only consistent with, but necessarily implies, a humble and constant dependence on Jesus Christ alone for grace and strength to follow him through all these dangers and difficulties, leaning on his almighty arm, his infinite wisdom, goodness, truth, and faithfulness, for pardon of their sins through his atonement, and deliverance from moral depravity; for power and skill to restrain and conquer their own lusts, and escape everlasting destruction; trusting in him to work in them both to will and to do all that is implied in their working out their own salvation. This, and all which has been mentioned in the above particulars, is implied in fear and trembling — in that humility and saving faith by which the Christian lives and works out his own salvation. By this he becomes strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. His grace is sufficient for him, and by it he overcomes.

9. As every Christian is coming vastly short in his duty in every thing which he does, and is constantly guilty of much sin, so he is in danger of unthought-of deviations from his duty, and by temptations to fall into particular gross sins, against which he has no security but the promises of the covenant of grace; and to escape these he depends upon the sovereign will of God, who worketh in him both to will and to do of his own good pleasure. This is the ground of a constant dread of every sin of omission or commission, and continual

care and watching against all sin, and fear of displeasing God, so as to leave him to commit some particular sin, in a trembling sense of his own weakness, and the certainty that he shall not avoid it unless God be pleased to prevent it, by working in him to will and do the contrary. With this view and feeling the Christian ought daily to walk while he is working out his own salvation, however assured he may be that he shall not fall away finally and miss of salvation; and this is implied in the fear and trembling recommended in the text.

10. While Christians are working out their own salvation with fear and trembling, they are sensible and acknowledge that by their own works, and the utmost they can do, they do not in the least recommend themselves to God as deserving any favor on this account, but are infinitely ill deserving as sinners, for which all they do makes not the least atonement; and so much depravity and sin constantly attends them in all they will and do, that they are continually adding to their guilt and ill desert. They, therefore, utterly renounce all dependence on their own righteousness, and trust wholly to the atonement and righteousness of Jesus Christ for the pardon of their sins and for all the favor and blessings they want and hope for, willing and rejoicing to receive all this purely for the sake of his atonement and worthiness, while they are considered in themselves as infinitely unworthy of the least favor, and deserving of endless destruction. This view of themselves, and cordial acknowledgment of it, is agreeably to truth, and essential to Christian humility, while they live by faith on Jesus Christ, and "walk humbly with God." Thus the Christian saith, (it is the constant language of his heart,) "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength;" strength to work out my own salvation, and righteousness to recommend me to pardon and the favor of God. In the exercise of this fear and trembling the apostle Paul renounced all dependence on his own works, desiring to be found in Christ, not having any righteousness of his own, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith. Such only are of a contrite and humble spirit who tremble at the word of God; constantly flying for refuge from the wrath to come, and laying hold on the hope set before them in Christ Jesus. He who trusts to himself that he is righteous, and attempts to recommend himself to God, or thinks he deserveth any favor for his own works, exerciseth that pride and self-confidence which excludes fear and trembling, and is contrary to living by faith.

What has been now said, in the description of fear and trembling, may be in a partial and imperfect manner represented by the following similitude:—

A person finds himself in the midst of a hideous forest and thicket, in which are impassable mountains, swamps, and dreadful precipices; he himself is sick unto death, and not able to walk a step, while he sees himself surrounded by hungry lions and innumerable other beasts of prey threatening to rush upon him and devour him. And, on consideration, he finds he has brought himself into this dangerous, wretched state by his own inexcusable folly, and that his disorders and weakness are really his own fault; that he has greatly abused the lord and owner of the territory in which he is, and all things in it; that he might, therefore, justly in his displeasure deliver him to the tormentors, and to be miserably devoured by the fierce beasts of prey. While he is in this situation, giving himself up to despair as wholly lost and doomed to inevitable destruction, the great personage, the owner of the forest and all that it contained, appears to him, and tells him, that though he had abused him, and had ruined himself by his own inexcusable folly, yet he was ready to forgive him, and was able and disposed to cure him of his disorders, and give him strength to walk, and to extricate him from the evil and dangerous state in which he was, and make him happy in the most agreeable circumstances. Upon this he stretched out his hand and bid him take hold of it, and he should be safely led out of this horrid place. The poor man felt an invisible energy accompanying this proposal and command, by which he was strengthened and willing to lay fast hold of the nobleman's hand, and to trust wholly in him as his deliverer; pleased to be wholly dependent on him for all the good he wanted, having in himself not the least sufficiency to help himself, and being utterly unworthy of the favor now offered to him, firmly believing the truth and ability of his patron to accomplish all he had promised.

The nobleman told him, that though he depended wholly on him for all his strength to act and walk, and every volition to exert himself in order to escape the dangers of this wilderness, resist the wild beasts, pass through the swamps and miry marshes, ascend the steep mountains, and stand firm on the brink and side of dreadful precipices, and arrive to the promised land, yet he must be active, and work out this his salvation in the exercise of his own care and constant labor; he must resist the beasts of prey, and by his watchfulness and exertions in every step of the dangerous, difficult way he had to go, he must persevere in his work, and in obedience to him, till he should bring him to a place of safety and rest; that, in a sense of his own insufficiency to will or do any thing in this travel in order to his salvation, and his total and constant

dependence on his patron for disposition and strength to will and do, and persevere in the work before him, he must keep his eye upon him, and place all his trust in him, keeping hold of his hand, or of a strong cord which should be fastened to himself, his patron, and always be in his reach when his hand was not. And in this way he should be carried safely on to the land of promise.

Thus the poor man set out, confiding in the power, truth, and faithfulness of his patron, and disclaiming all confidence in himself, continuing his course through hideous swamps, and over high and steep mountains, and on the edge of dreadful precipices, when, by losing his hold, or taking one wrong step, he should fall and be dashed in pieces in a moment, unless prevented by his guide, making use of the strong cord when his patron was out of sight. Thus he went on in the exercise of constant care and watchfulness, and incessant exertion, taking heed that every step of his should be according to the direction of his leader, and found that the efforts which he made to resist the wild beasts of prey, which continually sought to devour him, were effectual to make them fly from him, and thus he kept himself from their deadly touch. And the farther he went, he became more afraid of displeasing his guide, who was so worthy, kind, and condescending, and increased in a sense of his danger if left to himself, and the certainty and dreadfulness of the destruction which would in that case await him, confiding altogether in the power, wisdom, truth, and goodness of his patron. He sometimes in a measure forgot his own weakness and constant dependence on his patron, and attempted to stand and walk in his own strength; but this always cost him dear, for, when he thought thus to stand, he certainly fell, and it proved the occasion of shame and humiliation. And he made many wrong steps, which he knew was offensive to his patron, which filled him with shame and pain, and served to increase self-abhorrence and diffidence in himself. Thus he went on through all the difficulties and dangers of the way, in fear and trembling, increasing in self-diffidence and humility, and in his humble dependence and trust in his able, faithful patron, till he came to the promised land of safety and rest, where he is to live a happy and endless life.

From the whole which has been said in the description of fear and trembling, the result is, that it consists most essentially in Christian humility and poverty of spirit, in a sense of their own weakness and insufficiency to work out their own salvation, and a humble trust in God for his constant, powerful energy on their hearts, disposing and prompting them

effectually to will and to do all that they must will and do in order to be saved, together with all those views and exercises which are implied in this, according to the various objects in their sight, and the circumstances with which they are attended. This is essential to the life of all Christians, and to the exercise of every Christian grace; and the more they have of this, the stronger and more beautiful Christians they are. Thus the apostle Paul worked out his own salvation with fear and trembling, while confident and assured of the favor and love of God and of eternal life. He felt himself to be nothing but weakness, while he was strong in the Lord; to be less than the least of all saints, and that he was nothing, and the chief of sinners. He felt that all his sufficiency was of God; that by his grace working effectually in him he was what he was, and did what he did in the Christian life. Well might he then recommend this fear and trembling to all Christians, as essential to their character, without which all their attempts to work out their own salvation would be in vain, and end in sad disappointment.

And if this apostle did work out his salvation with fear and trembling, then the greatest and most assured Christian does not get beyond or above this; but the more he has of it, the greater is his strength and excellence. This has been in some measure kept in view through the whole of this description of fear and trembling; and the Christian who has not an assurance of his salvation, but at times is in great doubts whether he be a real Christian or not, though he may differ in some respects in his views, feelings, and exercises from the assured Christian, yet he is working out his own salvation with this same fear and trembling which the assured Christian has, while he is attended with many doubts and fears, which perfect or a more strong love would cast out.

From the foregoing view of fear and trembling, it appears to consist in a disposition and exercises of heart which are in direct opposition to a self-righteous spirit, or a trust and confidence in ourselves, relying on our own strength and sufficiency to work out our own salvation, depending on this as a righteousness to recommend to divine favor. They who are of this disposition depend on themselves to move first, and set themselves to work out their own salvation, hoping for all the favor they think they want, as the consequence of their thus working, and out of regard to it. This evil disposition, which is contrary to the nature of Christian exercises, our Savior sets in a clear and striking light in the character and conduct of the Pharisee, who applies to God in a confidence in his own sufficiency and righteousness, trusting in himself that he is

righteous, valuing himself on his own supposed good character, and despising others. The publican is an instance of humble fear and trembling.

SERMON IV.

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. — PHIL. ii. 12, 13.

III. The next thing proposed is, to consider and show what is the meaning of God's working in Christians both to will and to do of his good pleasure. This may be done by attending to the following particulars: —

1. Working *in* men to will and to do must intend more than affording them external means and advantages, and urging them by external motives to will and to do; for this cannot with any propriety be called working in them, when all that is supposed to be done is done out of them and externally. Some have supposed this to be all the meaning of these words; not because it is the natural meaning of them, for it is a forced meaning, but because they think man needs no more to be done for him in order to his working out his own salvation, and that any thing more, and an immediate operation on the will, is inconsistent with his liberty, and his actions being his own, or really virtuous. But the absurdity of all this has been often fully shown, and will appear before this subject is finished. It is sufficient to observe here, that to say that an operation on the human heart which effectually influences men to will and to do — that is, to act voluntarily, and consequently freely — is inconsistent with their acting voluntarily, and willing and doing any thing in the exercise of all the liberty which can in nature exist or be conceived of, is inconsistent with human liberty, is as flat and palpable a contradiction as can be made. If to work in men so as effectually to prevent their willing and doing in any particular instance be inconsistent with their having or exercising any freedom in that instance, then working in them so as effectually to make them will and do in that instance, or any other, is to promote their liberty, and cause them to act freely; and to say that what men do voluntarily is not in all cases their own act and deed, is to say that men are not capable of doing any thing which is their own act; for they can do nothing but what they do voluntarily, and the stronger and the more forcibly the

motives are impressed on their minds to induce them to will and act, the more freely they act, and the more sensibly are their choice and actions their own, and the more virtuous they are, if agreeable to the truth.

2. This does not mean any divine operation on man, which respects his willing and doing, of which willing and doing is not the certain consequence, and which, therefore, is consistent with his not willing and doing. For any divine operation in man, of which his willing and doing is not the effect, is not working in him to will and to do, because, notwithstanding such operation, he is left short of willing and doing. To work in men to will and to do, is to do that which is effectual to produce the will and the deed, so that there is a certain connection between the former and the latter. And this is the import of the original word here translated *worketh*. It signifies to operate with energy, and effectually to accomplish the end, and produce the willing and doing.

That working in men to will which leaves them short of willing, is the same with working in them to will if they will, which is talking most absurdly. Men are always able to will, if they will, and need no special assistance or influence on them to will what they will, or if they will, which is the same. If men are willing, or do will, they have no need of any operation or assistance to make them willing; for this they have already by the supposition, for they at all times can will, if they will. There can, therefore, be no such operation; and any supposed assistance or working in them which leaves them not actually willing or doing, is not working in them to will and to do.

3. God worketh in Christians to will and to do, by giving them the powerful influences of his Spirit, without which they would neither will nor do those things by which they work out their own salvation, and which are effectual to cause them to will and do them, there being a certain and infallible connection of one with the other.

Men are naturally, while wholly destitute of such influences, not only entirely destitute of all inclination to every thing that is truly virtuous and holy, but their hearts or wills are obstinately set in them to do evil, and they run swiftly on with all their hearts towards destruction, and they go on in this course until God changes their hearts by taking away the heart of stone, the obstinate, rebellious heart, and giving them a new heart, a humble, obedient heart, and thus makes them willing to obey him in the day of his power, or by his omnipotent energy on their hearts. And when he has begun this great and good work in any whom he pleases, he carries it

on until the day of Christ, and takes care constantly to grant them that assistance and those influences by which he thoroughly and effectually worketh in them both to will and to do all those things whereby they work out their own salvation, and are prepared to dwell with Jesus Christ in his kingdom forever. They receive the spirit of Christ when they first become Christians, to be in and dwell with them forever, by whom they are led, and who is the Author of every holy exercise of heart which they have, and of all the good works they do, by which they go on in the way to heaven, and until they are made perfectly holy. They being interested in the promises of the covenant of grace, their salvation is made sure, and God is engaged by promise never to leave them or forsake them, but to lead them safely on to glory, and that he will keep them by his mighty power, through their faith, by which they shall work out their own salvation.

That God thus works in all true Christians to will and to do all they will and do in working out their own salvation, and that they are thus wholly dependent on him for every right motion and choice of heart, and for every good thing they do, is not only plainly asserted in the words of the text, — which cannot be understood in any other sense than that which has been given of them, without straining and forcing them to speak an unnatural sense, — but is abundantly confirmed by innumerable other passages of Scripture, which speak the same language and assert the same thing, too many to be rehearsed here, and of which the careful, intelligent reader of the Bible cannot be ignorant. And this is expressly or implicitly acknowledged by all Christians in their prayers, however some professing Christians may in their speculations, and even in the feelings and tenor of the exercises of their hearts, contradict it.

4. There appears to be some intended difference between willing and doing, when it is said, God worketh in Christians *both* to will and to do. Strictly speaking, men are active in nothing but in the exercise of their will, or in willing, and, therefore, do nothing else; yet the effects and consequences of the exertions of their willing, which by divine constitution are connected with their acts of will, and their voluntary exertions, they are said to do or to be done by them, and are considered as in some sense distinct from their volitions; so that, when their will is carried into full execution, they may be said to do what they willed, and so both to will and to do. And when any thing is willed, determined, or chosen, which will cannot be immediately put into execution, but the act or event willed is future, and at a distance, — when such a choice is executed and

effected, the person thus willing has both willed and done the action or event. Thus, when a man wills and determines to attend public worship devoutly the next Sabbath, or to visit one of his neighbors and to give him some salutary advice and exhortation, or to give something to the poor, he wills those things; but they are not yet done till, by a course of acts of will, they actually take place and are effected, and then he hath both willed and done them. These observations may serve to show the propriety of the distinction in the words before us between willing and doing, and what the distinction imports. The apostle makes this same distinction more than once. He says, "To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not." (Rom. vii. 18.) He found a strong desire and inclination to do many good things, and was hearty in willing them; but when he came to put what he willed into actual execution, he failed of coming up fully to what he willed, and felt the necessity that God should work in him both to will and to do; and that, when he faithfully executed his own will, it was owing to the effectual grace of God working in him not only to will, but to do it. He, writing to the Corinthians respecting a collection for the poor, says to them, "Now, therefore, perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also." (2 Cor. viii. 11.)

5. The words which are added, "of his good pleasure," remain yet to be explained. The meaning appears to be, that God worketh in men to will and to do as it pleases him, in the exercise of his sovereign goodness, who hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. In the beginning of this work, he chooses whom he will to be the subjects of it, not being under obligation to any, who are all wholly gone out of the way, their hearts being set against God and every thing which has the nature of holiness. God waits not to have them turn and will that which is right, for this they would never do if left to themselves, whatever means are used and motives set before them to persuade them to it. He first begins, and gives them a new heart, and creates them in Christ Jesus unto good works, and works in them to will and to do. Thus, not by works of righteousness which they had done, (for they were dead in trespasses and sins, altogether rebellious,) but according to his mercy, he saved them, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost; and being thus made willing by the powerful operation of God on their hearts, according to his sovereign good pleasure, and having begun the good work, and they being brought into that covenant, according to which he has in his sovereign grace

promised to carry it on till it is completed, he worketh in them to will and to do, so as to insure and perfect their salvation, in that manner and degree which is according to his sovereign good pleasure.

The next thing proposed is, —

IV. To consider the force of the argument by which the foregoing exhortation is urged, or the reason given why Christians should work out their own salvation with fear and trembling, introduced and denoted by the particle *for*. "*For* it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

In order to set this in the true and best light, what has been before observed must be kept in view, viz., that the design and force of the exhortation is not merely or chiefly to work out their own salvation, but to do this in a particular way and manner, with fear and trembling. They began to work out their own salvation when the apostle was with them, and had made great progress in this work after he had left them; and he now enjoins upon them to go on in this great work, with fear and trembling, with self-diffidence, in a sense of their own insufficiency, and their constant absolute dependence on God; with humility and poverty of spirit, and all those feelings and exercises which are implied in this.

And he urges this upon them with this good and forcible reason, "*For* it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." You have no sufficiency of your own to do or will any thing right, but are always and entirely dependent on God, who is the Author of every choice and exertion by which you are enabled to proceed in the Christian life, who is above all control, and acts as an absolute Sovereign in this matter; and without him you can do nothing.

The sense of this passage of Scripture, as it has been now explained, may be expressed in the following words: —

"My beloved fellow-Christians, as you gave up yourselves to Jesus Christ, to obey and serve him, when I was present with you, and have since, in my absence, continued and made great advances in your obedience, I earnestly exhort you to go on in your Christian course with that holy fear and trembling which implies a sense of the difficulty, greatness, and importance of the work which is before you, keeping in view the eternal happiness and glory which the gospel sets before you, and the infinite evil that awaits all who come short, together with a constant conviction of your utter moral weakness and insufficiency for this work, and your entire and constant dependence on God for his powerful assistance in every step you take; so that, if he should leave you to yourselves, you

would certainly come short and perish. Be on your constant guard against the least confidence and trust in yourselves; be not high minded, because you have been thus distinguished, and have continued in your obedience, making advances in the Christian life, but fear; be humble, and, in a constant sense of your own utter insufficiency to do the least thing towards your salvation of yourselves, put your whole trust in God at all times for his constant influence and help, by which alone you will be able to work out your own salvation.

"This caution and exhortation to go on in your Christian course with this fear and trembling is proper and important, as it is natural to man to be high minded and to trust in himself; and even Christians, through their remaining depravity, are in danger of a criminal degree of this, in a measure, forgetting their own weakness and insufficiency and dependence on God, by which they greatly injure themselves, and because thus to fear and tremble is essential to the life of a Christian, and cannot be exercised in too high a degree; for the more a Christian has of this, the more beautiful and perfect is his character, and he will work out his own salvation with greater safety, strength, and activity; and there is the highest reason and the strongest motive for Christians to work out their own salvation with this fear and trembling to which I am exhorting, because they are in fact thus entirely and always dependent on God for every right motion of their heart and all they do in this work, as all they will and do is the effect of a divine operation effectually working in them both to will and do, and that of his sovereign good pleasure, and entirely independent of them."

The apostle exhorts them to maintain a humbling sense of their depravity, moral weakness, and utter insufficiency to the work in which they were engaged and had made considerable progress, and their entire dependence on God for every right exercise of heart; to remember and realize that all they had attained to in the Christian life was to be ascribed to God working in them to will and to do it, and that they were still thus dependent on him for every right choice and action; so that, if God should cease to work in them both to will and to do, they would immediately fall away and perish.

The apostle was sensible of the disposition in man to overlook his dependence on God every moment for every right motion of his will, and to trust in himself, relying on his own strength and sufficiency; and he knew how fatal this disposition was to the souls of men, if it were not counteracted and mortified, and that Christians had need to be reminded of this. He therefore warns the Christians at Philippi to avoid this fatal

rock, and at the same time marks out the only true and safe way to heaven. And happy would it have been for many professing Christians since, if they had attended to, understood and conformed to, this apostolic direction; who, contrary to this, have thought themselves something when they were nothing, and have attempted to work out their own salvation in their own strength, relying on their own sufficiency to will and to do, and consequently never have willed and done any thing right and really holy, but have perished in the foolish, presumptuous attempt.

Having attempted to explain these words under the four preceding heads, as was proposed, we come now, —

V. To improve the subject to practical purposes.

I. From the explanation which has been given of this important passage of Scripture, if it be in any measure just and right, we learn that many have overlooked the true sense of these words, have put a wrong meaning upon them, and perverted them to very bad purposes.

They are such who assert man's sufficiency to work out his own salvation of himself, without any distinguishing, efficacious influences of the Spirit of God effectually working in him both to will and to do all that is necessary for his salvation, and deny that man is absolutely and wholly dependent on God in working out his own salvation, but hold that he who does this distinguishes himself independent of God's assistance, of which he has no more than they have who do not work out their own salvation. They who espouse and contend for this sentiment are wont to appeal to the first words of the passage before us, — "work out your own salvation," — and think this sufficiently supports their cause, and asserts that men are of themselves to work out their own salvation, independent of any internal divine influence on their hearts effectually to will and to do. At the same time they wholly overlook the following words, or, if they are urged against them, they put an unnatural and forced meaning upon them, which has been shown cannot be the meaning, in the foregoing explanation.

Thus this text is wholly perverted to support and establish a doctrine which has a most pernicious and destructive tendency, is contrary to the whole tenor of Scripture, and directly contrary to this very text, taken together and rightly understood; which, it is thought, clearly appears from the foregoing explanation. This is a most dangerous and destructive perversion of Scripture; for every one who believes in his heart he is so sufficient to work out his own salvation, and to distinguish himself from those who neglect to do this,

without any distinguishing influences of the Spirit of God working in him both to will and to do, and thinks he is thus by his own self-sufficiency actually working out his own salvation, is deceiving himself, and trusting in man, and making flesh his arm. He is, therefore, accursed, and will sink into destruction. How lamentable that such doctrine should be advocated by any — yea, by so many! How unhappy that such multitudes should, through the moral blindness, selfishness, and pride of their hearts, be led astray by these false teachers! Surely the blind are leading the blind, and they both will fall into the ditch of endless destruction.

There have been those who have understood these words as a direction to unrenewed sinners to begin and work out their own salvation, enforced with a strong encouragement, if not a promise, that if they thus set out in earnest, and do what is called *their part*, God will give them all needed assistance to go on so as to obtain salvation, or do *his part*. This they understand by his working in them both to will and to do. Thus, according to them, God waits to have them set out and begin to will and to do, and then he sets in to assist them to go on. It is sufficient to show every considerate person, surely, that to put such a meaning on these words is wholly to pervert them, only to mention it. The words are spoken to Christians, in whom God had already begun a good work, by working in them to will and to do, and who had made great progress in the Christian life. And what he teaches them is their own insufficiency to will and to do, and that they did not begin in this work till God first wrought in them both to will and to do, nor go one step without his efficacious agency on their hearts; and, therefore, they ought to maintain a humbling sense of this on their minds, and put their whole trust in God, who only can work in them to will and to do that by which they must work out their own salvation. To apply these words to sinners, to encourage them to a proud conceit of their own moral strength and sufficiency, and to trust in themselves to work out their own salvation, is as direct and gross a perversion of them as can well be imagined.

There are others, who, though they have rightly considered the exhortation in the text to be addressed to Christians, yet have mistaken the proper meaning and force of the exhortation of fear and trembling, and of the reason given by which the exhortation is urged, and, therefore, have overlooked the true sense of the text, and really perverted it. Without attending to the true, or any precise and determinate, meaning of fear and trembling, they consider the exhortation to Chris-

tians to work out their own salvation as directing them to do what they call *their part*, which they are to perform without taking any notice of the *manner* in which they are exhorted to do it; and, consequently, represent God's working in them to will and to do rather as the consequence of their working, in which he will assist them in their endeavors to work out their own salvation; so that the meaning of these words, according to them, is this: Work out your own salvation; do your part; for then, and on this condition, God will do his part, and work in you both to will and to do.

He who has attended to and understood the explanation of these words, which has been attempted in the preceding discourses, and approves of it, must be sensible that the above representation of the meaning of the text wholly overlooks the true design and force of it, and is a total perversion of it, and may justly be said to "darken counsel by words without knowledge."

On the whole, it appears that they who attend only to the first part of the passage, which has been explained, as exhorting men to work out their own salvation, without bringing into view the following words, — not attending to the words "fear and trembling," as expressing the manner in which this work is to be done, or giving a wrong sense to them, — have not given the true import and force of the exhortation, and have not improved it to promote the purpose designed by it, and many have in this way perverted it to establish delusion and falsehood; and that they also who have attended to the last words, — "for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do," — without attending to their connection with the foregoing exhortation, and the true meaning of fear and trembling, and the force of the reason and argument from thence expressed in the particle *for*, have, at best, not given the true and important meaning of the whole passage, and have overlooked the design and force of it, and the most interesting and practical truths contained in it, if they have not improved it to promote error and delusion.

In short, this text cannot be understood, unless it be considered in the connection of each part of it, and in the true meaning of every expression and word contained in it. But when this is done with proper care and judgment, it will be found to be clear, easy, consistent, and harmonious, and to exhibit true religion both in theory and practice, and the real character of a Christian, as distinguished from all counterfeits.

In this view, the preceding particular explanation has been attempted, and is to be yet further improved.

II. From this passage of Scripture, as it has been explained,

several doctrines are expressed or implied, and the objections which have been made to them appear to be wholly without foundation, and very unreasonable. Some of these will be particularly mentioned and considered.

1. As God is here said to produce every good volition and exercise in the Christian by which he works out his own salvation, it has been objected, that according to this the work is all done by God, and not by the Christian, which renders the text, taken together, wholly inconsistent and absurd; as if it were said, "Work out your own salvation; but at the same time remember that you can do nothing, and really have nothing to do; for it is God who must do all, by producing the will and the deed."

The mere mentioning of this objection is sufficient to expose the unreasonableness and absurdity of it. If God works in them to will and to do, then they both will and do, and this is as much their own will and deed, as much their own exertion and work, as it could be were there no previous exertion of God, as necessary in order to their thus willing and doing. Christians do nothing in working out their own salvation till they begin to will and act; and when they do this, it is as much their own act and deed as in the nature of things any thing that is willed and done can be, whatever God may do in working in them thus to will and to do. The latter is the work of God, and not theirs; the former is as much their own exertion and work as if God did nothing in them, and is entirely distinct from what God does. Their own exertions, their willing and doing in working out their own salvation, are as necessary as if they were independent of God, and he did not work in them to will and to do; and, therefore, this is no reason why they should not will and work, but sit still and do nothing, but is a good reason why they should work, and do what they do with fear and trembling, not trusting in themselves, but in God alone, to enable them to go through and perfect this work.

2. This doctrine of absolute dependence on God for every volition and exertion in working out our own salvation, which is implied and asserted in the explanation which has been given of this text, has been represented and objected to as a very discouraging doctrine, tending to lead persons to sit still and not attempt to do any thing towards their salvation.

It is granted that the view of the text which has been given does tend to discourage persons from attempting to work out their own salvation in their own strength and sufficiency, independent of God and his effectual operation on their hearts to will and to do, and will effectually do it where it has its

proper influence on the hearts of men. But this affords no real ground of objection to the doctrine, but is rather in favor of it. It is necessary that men should be discouraged from working out their salvation in this way, and relinquish it, in order to their being saved; and the sooner and more thoroughly they are discouraged, the better. Such discouragement is, indeed, given in the text, and in a vast number of other passages in the Bible, being rightly understood; for men are every where in Scripture represented as wholly dependent on God for the effectual influences of the Holy Spirit in order to do that which is necessary to be done by them for their salvation.

But to him who feels his own moral depravity and utter insufficiency to will and do any thing by which he may be saved without the powerful operations of God to work in him to will to do it, this doctrine will open the only ground of hope and encouragement to do or attempt to do any thing. If a child or any person were called to do some great thing, to which he knew he was wholly unequal, being utterly insufficient to such a work of himself, he would not have any courage to attempt it until he knew that one stood by him who was able and promised to give him all necessary assistance, if he would rely wholly on him for it; but this would give him sufficient encouragement to engage in the work with hope of success, and would be the only ground of encouragement and hope.

Jesus Christ said to his disciples, "Without me ye can do nothing." Surely he did not say this to discourage them and lead them to sit still and do nothing, but to encourage them to trust in him, and to engage in the work assigned to them with alacrity, courage, and hope. The apostle Paul knew that he was what he was by the grace of God working mightily and effectually in him both to will and to do; that he had no sufficiency of himself for any good thing, but that all his sufficiency was of God; that without the powerful assistance of Christ he could do nothing. Did this discourage him from attempting to do any thing? No; directly the contrary: from this he took his sole encouragement, and was animated to pursue his work with activity and diligence, and labored more than all the other apostles, knowing that, through Christ who strengthened him, he could do all things.

Thus it appears, not only that the objection under consideration is altogether without any ground or reason, but that it is made against a passage of Scripture which, according to the explanation which has been given, affords the only ground of hope to sinners, and gives sufficient and the only encourage-

ment to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, and which does contain a complete answer to the objection, and that it is as direct, great, and mischievous a perversion and abuse of the text as can be imagined. Let it, therefore, be rejected by all with abhorrence, and silenced forever.

3. The objection which has been made that this doctrine of man's dependence on the powerful operation of God for every virtuous and holy act of will, so that it is really produced by him, and could not exist did not God work in him both to will and to do, is inconsistent with human liberty, and makes man a mere machine, who is acted upon in all he wills and does, is really answered and refuted in the words themselves, as they have been explained.

Human liberty consists in willing and doing, or in acting voluntarily. To act freely, and to act voluntarily, are synonymous terms, meaning the same thing, and it is impossible to exercise or conceive of any other real liberty than this. All the liberty of any moral agent consists in acting voluntarily. There is no other liberty in nature possible. Therefore, liberty does not consist in any thing which takes place before the actual exertion of willing; man does not, he cannot, exercise freedom antecedent to his acting voluntarily, or when he ceases to will and to do. Therefore, when God worketh in men to will and do what otherwise they would not will and do, their liberty is so far from being obstructed by this, that it is promoted, and the consequence is, their actually willing and doing, and, consequently, exercising all the liberty of which any creature is or can be made capable. How groundless and unreasonable, then, is this objection! It amounts to this, that man cannot be free in that which is the only exercise of liberty, because he never would have acted thus freely in that instance did not God, by working in him, induce him to exercise all the freedom of which he is capable in actually willing and doing.

It is evident that many puzzle and bewilder themselves about human liberty, and think many facts and doctrines contained in the Bible to be inconsistent with liberty, or at least confess themselves unable to conceive how they can be consistent with it, because they have never attended so much to the nature of human liberty as to be able to determine precisely in what it does consist, and imagine it consists in something of which they have no clear and consistent idea, and which is really impossible, and never did or can exist. If they would carefully consult their own feelings to find what that is which they feel and exercise when they consider themselves perfectly free in what they do, they would find that when they

acted voluntarily or of choice, and did as they pleased, they acted freely, and possessed all the freedom they could desire or have any consistent conception of; therefore, that though God work in them to will and to do, or whatever were the previous cause of their willing and acting as they did, yet they were perfectly free in their choice and conduct; and that it was as much their own will and choice as it could be on any supposition whatever, and they themselves wholly accountable for what they will and do.

This passage, therefore, is so far from being inconsistent with human liberty, that it supposes and asserts that persons have and exercise all the liberty in the practice of morality and religion of which man is capable, and carries in the face of it a complete confutation of the objection under consideration; and let no one imagine he has not all the freedom that is desirable, or that, in the nature of things, can be possessed and exercised, while he feels and knows that he acts voluntarily, or does as he pleases. And if he does both will and do that which is really working out his own salvation, let him ascribe it wholly to the sovereign mercy of God, who worketh in him thus to will and do of his good pleasure.

SERMON V.

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. — Phil. ii. 12, 13.

Having considered three objections to the text, as it has been explained in the preceding discourse, it is proposed in this to answer several more.

4. It is objected, that if men are not and cannot be willing to work out their own salvation, unless God first work in them to will and to do, then they cannot be blamable for not willing and doing.

To this objection there is a full solution and answer in the words to which it is made. If none do any thing towards working out their own salvation till God worketh in them to will and to do, this supposes that previous to this they are unwilling, and that this unwillingness, or opposition of will to this work, is the only difficulty in the way of their willing and doing that by which they would be saved; and were it not for this opposition of heart or will to do that by which they

would be saved, there would be no need that God should thus work in them to will and to do, which otherwise they voluntarily refuse to do. It is, therefore, supposed that they act freely in willing and doing that which is contrary to working out their salvation, and, consequently, that they are wholly blamable for voluntarily opposing that by which they might be saved, if they were willing to comply with it. For we have no other idea of blame or crime but that which consists in willing and doing that which is contrary to reason and truth and the command of God, when nothing is in the way of willing and doing that which is right and wise but their unwillingness or opposition of heart or will to that which is required; and the greater the degree of opposition of will there is to that which is right and good, and the stronger the propensity and inclination is to the contrary, the more blamable and guilty such persons appear to be to all who exercise reason or common sense; and the more fixed in the strong and constant opposition of their hearts they are to that which is wise and good, and propensity to do evil, so that they are perfectly deaf to all warnings and counsels and motives which can be set before them to choose and do that which is right and would make them happy, and they cannot be reclaimed by any means whatsoever that can be used with them, the more odious and blameworthy they are, according to the feelings, judgment, and consent of all.

If a child be disobedient to his parents, and wholly refuses to pay any respect to them and regard their dictates, the more obstinate he appears to be and fixed in his rebellion, under all possible means used with him to reclaim him, — this is so far from being any excuse, or extenuation of his blame or guilt, that it is considered by all, unless it be those who are joined with him in the same disobedience, as an aggravation of his guilt. Who ever thought of excusing a murderer or thief, and could think him blameless or the less guilty, because he had long persisted in his evil practices, and could not be reclaimed by all the persuasions, threats, and severe corrections which could be administered or devised? Can any one avoid thinking him the worse, and more odious and blamable, the more his inclination to murder or steal is proved to be fixed and incurable? It is possible the person himself might plead this as an excuse; and his companions in the same wickedness might join with him in exculpating him and themselves, because they had such a strong inclination to persist in their practices, and were so utterly averse from a reformation, and so far from having the least disposition to any thing of the kind, that they could not be willing to hearken to advice and

reform. But all who are not murderers nor thieves would consider their attempting to make such an excuse as an aggravation of their crimes, and an increase of their blameworthiness.

This is applicable to the case before us, and may serve to illustrate it. Mankind are all rebels against God, and are sunk into total moral depravity, in which they have a strong, fixed, and incurable propensity to rebellion, and a proportionable aversion from God and holiness, and will not come to Christ that they might be saved. This depravity and obstinacy is incurable, — that is, by any thing in themselves, — for their whole inclination, and all their exertions, are an opposition to turning to God, or a willingness to embrace the gospel; it is incurable by any means that can be used with them, or by any thing that can be done for them, by any creature. The removal of this rebellious disposition is infinitely out of the reach of the power of men or angels. He only can do it who created all things, and is able to take away the hard, obstinate heart, and give an obedient one, and work in men to will and to do that to which they are naturally totally averse. Nothing is or can be in the way to prevent any persons being willing to embrace the gospel but a contrary will and choice, and aversion of heart from Jesus Christ and the gospel; and if this be not in the nature of it criminal, and blamable in every degree of it, then there can be no such thing as blame or crime in nature; and if the strong degree of opposition to that which is right and wise, and inclination to the contrary, so as to render it incurable, in the sense explained, does render the person innocent, then every the least degree of such inclination is not criminal; so there can be no such thing as sin, unless men can sin without any inclination to sin, and may incur blame when they exercise no choice.

All this is supposed and really asserted in our text: that mankind are wholly and obstinately opposed in their will and affections to that which is right and wise and necessary to be chosen in order to their salvation; that this is the only and all the difficulty in the way of their salvation, and is the only thing which renders it necessary that God should powerfully work in them to make them willing to embrace the way of salvation. The objection is, therefore, contrary to the passage objected to, which, when considered, contains a full answer to it; and the objection appears not to have the least foundation, if all blame consists wholly in having no inclination to that which is right and wise, and in an inclination and choice which is directly contrary; and nothing can be blamable but this; and the stronger this inclination is, and the more there is of it,

the more and greater is the guilt; which no man can deny, without contradicting the plainest dictates of reason and common sense.

When it is said in the objection, that if men *cannot* embrace the gospel unless God work in them to will and to do it, this must render them blameless, if by this any difficulty is designed to be expressed which does not wholly consist in their unwillingness to this, and is not the same with their *will not*, it is not true that they *cannot;* for, as has been observed, there can be no other bar in the way of their embracing the gospel but a fixed opposition of will to it; and this is supposed and even asserted in the text, as nothing else or more is necessary to work out their salvation but a will to do it; and when it is said they cannot be willing, the meaning is, that they are wholly destitute of the least inclination or real desire to comply, and have such a strong, fixed opposition to it, that they cannot be willing to embrace the gospel, such opposition of will being entirely inconsistent with it so long as it continues; and they being without the least inclination or desire to remove this opposition, but acquiesce in it with all their hearts, it cannot be removed by any thing short of the power of God working in them to will and to do. But if this be all that the objector means by his *cannot*, this is so far from being any excuse for not being willing to embrace the gospel, that this is the very thing in which all blame consists; and the more there is of this *will not*, and the stronger the inclination is to oppose and reject the gospel, the greater is the guilt and blameworthiness, as has been before observed, and cannot be denied by any who will allow that there is any such thing as guilt and blame in nature. In this sense the words of Christ are to be understood, when he says, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." (John vi. 44.) The Savior of the world does not say this to excuse men as blameless in not coming to him, but rather to express their total depravity and the greatness of their guilt, asserting that there is such opposition of the will or heart of all men naturally to him that they are disposed to reject the gospel, and, while this is the case, no man can with such a heart come to Christ, as this implies a contradiction; and this depravity and opposition of heart is so great and fixed, that no man will come to him, unless it be removed by the power of God working in him to will and do that which he would otherwise continue utterly to refuse. That these words are thus to be understood, is certain from what Christ saith elsewhere on this subject. He said to the Jews, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life. How can ye believe, who receive honor one of

another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?" In which words he asserts, that the only thing in the way of their coming to him was, that it was contrary to their inclination or will, and that their inability to believe on him, which is the same with coming to him, or the only reason why they could not believe, was nothing but an opposite inclination to desire and seek that which was contrary to believing on him and coming to him. We are certain that Jesus Christ did consider this inability to come to him, though so fixed and great that it could not be removed by any power short of that divine energy which can give a new heart, as any excuse for not coming to him; for he asserts their not believing on him and refusing to come to him to be the greatest crime, for which they might justly be condemned to perish forever. Hear his words: "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only-begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. And when he (the Spirit) is come, he will reprove the world of sin because they believe not on me."

If they who make the objection under consideration would attend to all this, and consider it well, they would know that they were as really objecting against Jesus Christ himself as against our text, as it has been explained, — for he saith the same things in the words which have been cited, — and they would at the same time be convinced that the objection is contrary to all reason and the common sense of mankind, and implies the greatest absurdity and contradiction to all moral truth.

Many bewilder themselves, and put a stumbling block before their faces, and make great and hurtful mistakes, by using the words *cannot* and *inability* in a sense which is inconsistent with blame, and wholly excuses for not doing what a person cannot do. That which a person cannot do, though ever so much inclined to do it, and however willing he is to do it, were it in his power, he cannot be blamed for not doing. And this is the sense in which mankind commonly use the words *cannot* and *inability*. But when these words are used in a moral sense, so as to imply no difficulty in complying with what is required but want of inclination and desire to do it, or an actual opposition of will to it, — which is quite a different and opposite sense from the other, — such a want of ability or power to comply with that which is reasonable and right does not excuse a refusal to comply, but necessarily implies blame, and the person is criminal in pro-

portion to the degree of his inability to comply, or the strength and fixedness of the opposition of his heart to that which is required, in which all the difficulty of this compliance consists.

This may be illustrated by the following instance: A poor man, a real object of charity, suffering for want of the necessaries of life, who must perish soon if he had not speedy relief, begged the compassion and help of two neighbors who then were together. One of them was a kind, benevolent man, and felt for the sufferer, and ardently wished it were in his power to relieve him; but he was poor himself, and had nothing to give to his distressed brother. The other was rich, and able immediately to help the suffering, perishing man, if he had been willing to do it; but he was a stranger to benevolence, and had the greatest aversion from giving or doing any thing for the relief of any of his fellow-men, and never had felt the least compassion to the distressed, or given so much as a penny for the relief of any, though he had many opportunities to do it, and not a few had perished by his refusing to afford them any help. He, therefore, in this instance hardened his heart, and felt not the least compassion for the perishing man, and refused to save this beggar from death, which was in his power, had he been willing to give him what he could easily spare.

Who can avoid pronouncing the former blameless, or considering the latter as very criminal and blameworthy? And the farther he was from any inclination to help the distressed, and the more fixed and obstinately set he was against giving any thing to the poor, the more vile and criminal he must appear to all. The latter cannot be liberal, and delight in distributing what he possesses, until he has a new heart, and is possessed with a disposition directly contrary to that which now governs him in all his thoughts and desires. And his heart is wholly, and with all its strength, opposed to a benevolent, generous heart, and, therefore, he cannot have the least inclination and desire to have such a heart, but is entirely satisfied and pleased with his present selfish disposition. And if he should pretend to desire and attempt to obtain a good, benevolent heart, all his desires and attempts would really be nothing but the exercise of his selfishness, and the gratification of his evil, covetous disposition, and, therefore, would be nothing but real opposition to a good heart. So that it may be truly said of him, he is utterly unable to change his own heart from a selfish to a benevolent one. Yet who can think him the less criminal and blamable on this account? Must not all look upon him as guilty and odious in proportion to the fixed strength of his selfish, cruel disposition, and his inability by this to become benevolent and kind?

The difficulty which is in the way of his helping the poor man may be as great, and his inability to do a generous action as real, and as much insurmountable and immovable by him, for the reason which has been mentioned, as the inability of the former to relieve him. It may be said, agreeable to truth, of both of them, that they cannot relieve the distressed sufferer. But their inability is so entirely different, and of so opposite a nature and kind, that the inability of the former excuses, and that of the latter is so far from excusing that it is the very thing in which his crime and blame consist. And they who attend to all that has been offered or can be said on this point, and yet will not see the difference and opposition between these two kinds of inability, but persist in asserting that there is no difference, and that they equally render a man blameless for not doing what he is unable to do, — that the inability of the latter of these two men to relieve a distressed person is as blameless and excusable as that of the former, — are not capable of being reasoned with, or of making any proper use of common sense; which cannot be accounted for but by supposing that their inability to see and make this distinction, and reason properly upon it, is not owing to any defect in their natural capacity and reasoning powers, but to an inclination of heart, or propensity of will, which perverts their reason, and shuts their eyes against the light of truth, so that they cannot see it, however clearly it shines; which is the criminal inability that has been described.

Every degree of inclination to sin is opposition to the contrary, and is a difficulty in the way of a holy inclination and choice; and the former necessarily weakens the latter in proportion to the degree of it, so that perfect holiness cannot be exercised so long as any degree of the opposite inclination exists. And the difficulty or inability to be perfectly holy is greater or less in proportion to the greater or less degree of the opposite inclination to sin. This, the apostle Paul says, is the case with Christians in this world. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye *cannot* do the things that ye would." (Gal. v. 17.) None will suppose, it is presumed, that the apostle said this to excuse Christians for not being perfectly holy, or designed to represent the lusting of the flesh, or inclination to sin, as blameless, by saying that they *could not* do the things that they would; for if the lusting of the flesh be not sinful and blamable, then there cannot be any such thing as sin or blame. When the apostle says, "ye cannot do the things that ye would," he does not offer this as an excuse for their not doing them, since all the difficulty in

the way of their doing them was their sin. It was, therefore, a wholly blamable, sinful *cannot;* it was a difficulty and inability to be perfectly holy which was criminal and wholly blamable in every degree of it, and that, too, in proportion to the strength and degree. Christians had a degree of holiness which was exercised in opposing all sinful inclination, and desiring to be perfectly holy. They would be, they had a desire to be, so holy as to do all the things which were required of them in a perfect manner and degree; but a contrary propensity to sin still worked in them, and rendered them unable to do what they would, so that, in every exertion, they fell short. This, therefore, was a sinful inability, — a *cannot* wholly blamable, — for it consisted in their inclination to sin.

The unregenerate sinner is nothing but flesh, in the apostle's sense of the word here and in many other places; that is, corrupt human nature. All his inclinations and desires are lusts of the flesh, in which there is no good thing. This his carnal mind is enmity against God, is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. He has no inclination or desire to be holy — to oppose the carnal mind; which, therefore, has the whole dominion in his heart, and reigns there without control. The difficulty and inability he is under to will and to do that which is good, is total and complete; and as the Christian cannot do the things that he would, — cannot be perfectly holy, — the sinner cannot have the least inclination or desire to be holy, or will and do any thing towards his salvation. And as the partial inability in the Christian to be perfectly holy is altogether his sin, and consists in it, so the total inability to will and to do that which is holy in the sinner is all of it his sin, and, therefore, consists wholly in that which is blameworthy. His inability, his "cannot," is all sin, and nothing else. And to offer this as an excuse, as rendering the sinner wholly blameless, is so unreasonable, absurd, and perverse, that it cannot be done by an honest, discerning mind.

So much has been said in answer to this objection, perhaps too much, and some repetitions have been made, it may be too many, because it is so much in the mouths of many, originates from delusion, and has a most pernicious tendency.

5. The objection which is often made that it is unreasonable to command or exhort sinners to do that which they have no power to do, and cannot do unless assisted and enabled to do it by the Spirit of God, appears to be groundless from our text itself, when rightly understood, and is fully refuted in the answer to the last objection. When it is well understood

what is meant by want of power to obey what is commanded, and comply with the exhortation,—that it means nothing but want of will, and an opposite inclination,—the objection vanishes, as nothing to the purpose. It means a want of ability to obey, which is itself sin, and that in which blamableness consists, and, therefore, cannot be an excuse for not obeying. Therefore, as this kind of inability is only a sinful opposition of heart to that which is right and duty, it does not remove or lessen the obligation to obedience and to comply with duty. Surely none can think that a person may not with reason and propriety be exhorted and commanded to do that which is right and his duty, and for his interest to do, merely because he is not willing to do it. For if so, then no man may be commanded or exhorted to that which he is not inclined or willing to do; which denies the existence of any law, except it be a man's own inclination and will. If God may not command a creature to do what he is not willing to do, there is an end to all divine laws and moral government, and a man's own inclination and will is his only law or rule of conduct; consequently, there can be no sin, unless it be doing that which is contrary to a person's will and choice; which is impossible.

But it may be asked, Where is the propriety of commanding or exhorting sinners to do that which they never will do, unless they have a new heart given to them by God, and he work in them to will and do it? or what end will this answer?

Reply. The reason and propriety of this has been already shown, and that, if this were not reasonable and proper, there can be no such thing as law and moral government; and this is suited, and even necessary, to answer the following ends:—

First. If there were no law and commands, and these were not set before sinners, pointing out their duty, and urging them to do what is necessary to their salvation, they could not know what the law is and what is their duty, and what is necessary to be done by them in order to be saved; which is important and necessary. Without this they would not be under advantage to know the character of God, of Jesus Christ, nor their own character, nor what they must be and do to be saved. "For how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?"

Second. If commands and exhortations to obedience were not applied to sinners, they would not know that they are sinners, and how depraved and corrupt they are, and how opposite their hearts are to the gospel, and that they are undone forever, unless sovereign grace give them a new heart and make them willing in the day of divine power; all which it is important and even necessary the sinner should know, in

order to his being saved. The apostle Paul said, "I had not known sin but by the law;" and this is true of every one, for by the law is the knowledge of sin; and they cannot know that their hearts are strongly opposed to the gospel, the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, until they have the offer, and are invited and exhorted to believe on him.

THIRD. Therefore, the gospel is to be preached to all men, and every man is to be instructed, warned, and exhorted to believe, that he may escape the wrath to come, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear or refuse to hear. This is the way which God takes to answer his wise, benevolent purposes. They to whom he in his wisdom is pleased to give a heart to believe will embrace the gospel, and be saved; and under a conviction of their guilty, lost state by nature, and that they should have justly perished had not God given them a heart to believe, will ascribe the whole of their salvation to sovereign grace, and give all the glory of it to God forever. They who do not hear and embrace the gospel, but, according to the criminal choice of their own hearts, reject the great salvation, will perish, under the aggravated guilt of slighting Jesus Christ, and abusing his grace and love, and will exhibit a striking manifestation of the exceeding, amazing depravity and wickedness of the human heart, and of the justice of God in their eternal destruction.

It has been observed, that the text contains an answer to the objection now under consideration, and it has been shown how it is answered. But an answer is found in it in another view of it. The apostle tells Christians that, if God did not work in them to will and to do, they would not will and do any thing towards their own salvation; and at the same time exhorts both to will and to do, and work out their own salvation with fear and trembling. This is directly in the face of the objection. For though they could have no will to work unless God gave it to them, yet they are exhorted and commanded to be willing and to work out their own salvation. Why, then, may not the sinner, who can have no will to do any thing towards his salvation unless God work it in him, be exhorted and commanded to will and to do? Is it possible to make any objection to this, which is not really against the exhortation in the text?

6. It may be further objected, that the text, as it has been explained, implies the doctrine of the certain perseverance of all true Christians unto eternal life; which doctrine tends to make them who think themselves Christians careless about their salvation, and leads them to indulge themselves in sin, since, having once believed, they shall be saved, whatever life they live.

Answer. The text, as it has been understood, it is granted, does imply the doctrine of the perseverance of all real Christians; for if they depend wholly on God to renew their will to holy exercises, by which they are born again, made new creatures, and created in Christ Jesus unto good works, there is no reason to think he will forsake such a work, and suffer it to come to nothing, as there is an apparent inconsistency in this: it may, therefore, be relied upon as certain, that Infinite Wisdom and unchangeable Power and Goodness never begins this great and good work, by which men are brought into a state of salvation and become real friends to God, and are pardoned and have his favor, without a design to carry it on till it is completed in their perfect holiness and endless happiness, as this work from beginning to end depends wholly on him. The contrary supposition appears most unreasonable and unworthy of God, and dishonorable to him. Moreover, the expression itself denotes a constant work which God is carrying on in Christians, without ceasing or relinquishing it. "It is God which worketh in you to will and to do;" that is, continually, not at one time only, but always, to the end of life. It is not said, God did once work in them, or that he did work in them sometimes, but not always; but he worketh in you, as being common to all Christians, and at all times; and in this view only it can be a reason and encouragement to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling, as it has been explained.

But if the doctrine of the certain perseverance of all true Christians to final salvation were not implied in the words of the text, when considered alone, yet it is established with the utmost certainty when they are viewed in connection with what the apostle had before said to these Christians in this epistle. His words are, "Being confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." (Phil. i. 6.) The good work is that spoken of in the text, by which God was working in them both to will and to do. The apostle, under inspiration, was confident, which amounts to a certainty, that, wherever he begins this work, he will carry it on to perfection. We, therefore, may be confident and certain, that, wherever God begins to work in men to will and to do that which is good and holy, he designs to carry this work on to perfection; that he will completely finish what he once begins. And this same truth is abundantly asserted many ways in the Bible, to which it is needless now particularly to attend.

It is objected to this doctrine, that it tends to make Christians careless, and is a temptation to indulge in sin, seeing,

according to this doctrine, their salvation is secured to them, let them live as they will. An answer to this is found in the words of the text in which this doctrine is contained, as has been shown; for, at the same time, Christians are told that God had begun a good work in them, which he would finish, carrying it on to perfection: they are exhorted to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling; and that, too, for this very reason, that God was working in them so as effectually to secure salvation to them. They are informed that their working out their own salvation in this particular manner was as necessary to their salvation as if God did not intend their salvation; that there was no other way to be saved; and that God thus working in them both to will and to do, with an intention to go on and perfect it, was the only encouragement, and a strong and cogent motive, thus to work out their own salvation.

The objection before us is, therefore, made in direct opposition to the words of the text, in which the doctrine of the saints' perseverance is improved as a motive to every Christian duty in the practice of real holiness; it is, therefore, impossible to encourage the contrary. This apostle always speaks in the same strain. He says of himself, in this same epistle, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." The apostle considered himself as apprehended, or laid hold of, by Jesus Christ when he was converted and became a Christian, with intent to keep his hold of him till he had brought him to possess the prize of eternal life. This was so far from making him careless and inactive in the duties of the Christian life, that he improved it as an encouragement and motive to activity, zeal, and engagedness in running the Christian race, that he might obtain perfect holiness and the prize which his Savior intended for him, and so work out his own salvation, of which he was assured, by what Jesus Christ had already done for him by working in him both to will and to do those things which accompany salvation, being infallibly connected with it. In the same view he writes to the Christians at Thessalonica: "Let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for an helmet the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." Here he writes in the same manner as in our text. He urges them to the practice of Christian holiness from the encouragement and motive that

God had designed them for salvation, giving them the character of his children, by which they were interested in the everlasting covenant of grace, by which salvation was insured to them.

This objection not only has an answer in these and innumerable other passages of Scripture, but it is also confuted by the inconsistency and unreasonableness of it. It carries this inconsistency in it, that if the perseverance of Christians in holiness is made certain by God, on whom they depend for it, and he has determined they shall work out their own salvation, then it is not necessary that they should live a holy life, and work out their salvation, and they may be saved without all this, and however much they neglect their own salvation, and indulge themselves in all manner of iniquity; or, if it be made certain that they shall persevere in a holy life that they may be saved, then they may as well and certainly be saved without persevering in a holy life, and though they fall away into sin; and this will encourage Christians not to attempt or desire to persevere in obedience, and to live in sin. They who can argue thus have given up the use of reason to embrace the most palpable absurdity.

The objector also falls into another inconsistency, by supposing that a Christian may have assurance that he is a real Christian, and, therefore, shall be saved, when he is so inclined to sin as to prefer living in sin and the indulgence of his lusts to a holy life, and that he may maintain his assurance while he neglects religion as a task, and lives a careless, wicked life, which is contrary to truth, to Scripture, and the reason and nature of things. If it were possible that a real Christian could be in such a frame, and have such a prevailing disposition, and continue in it, it would be impossible that he should have any just and well-grounded assurance of his being a Christian; for he can have no evidence of this but from a disposition and exercises directly contrary to a preference of a life of sin, viz., exercises of real holiness, disposing to work out his own salvation with fear and trembling. The hypocrite, who has no true grace, may be so deluded as to think and presume he is a real Christian, and abuse the doctrine of the certain salvation of all who are once Christians, to indulge in sin, because he has really no love to holiness, and prefers a life of sin to the life of a Christian. But it is inconsistent to suppose that a real Christian should have, or think he has, evidence that he is a Christian, while he is in a careless frame, and loves the pleasure of sin rather than God and holiness.

The Scripture asserts that assurance of being a Christian,

and of salvation, is to be attained and maintained in no other way but the exercise of holiness, and great care and diligence in living a holy life. The apostle John says, "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him." (1 John iii. 18, 19.) The apostle Peter exhorts professing Christians to take care to live and abound in the exercise of every Christian grace, in order to have and maintain an assurance of their real Christianity, and concludes with these words: "Wherefore, the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall." (2 Pet. i. 5–10.) This is the scriptural way of assurance; and they who think they have an assurance that they are Christians in any other way, and from some other proposed evidence, are presuming, and deceiving themselves to their own destruction.

And it must be further observed, that it is not only inconsistent with the character of a true Christian at any time to prefer a neglect of religion and a living in allowed sin to a holy life, if the former were as sure a way to salvation as the latter, — so that an assurance that he shall be saved will be no inducement to him to live a careless, sinful life, — but it is yet a greater inconsistency and contradiction to suppose a Christian, in that strong and lively exercise of grace, and love of holiness, which always attends a true assurance that he is a Christian and shall be saved, should then and for that reason prefer a life of sin to a holy life, and from this assurance be led into sin. This is impossible; and directly the reverse is certain, viz., that such an assurance is not only accompanied by a strong desire and engagedness to live a holy life, — as without this there can be no real assurance, as has been shown, — but the assurance itself will greatly add to the strength of desire and engagedness to live a holy life, to the honor of God, and for his own comfort, were it not necessary in order to be saved.

There are not only these inconsistencies in the objection, but the objector supposes that the true Christian is wholly selfish and mercenary in all he does, and is always disposed to prefer a life of sin to a holy life, if he may be as sure of his own salvation by living in sin as by the contrary. Therefore, having no true love to God and regard for his honor, nor any delight in the law of God, or love of holiness for its own sake, if he can obtain a promise that he shall be saved, he will have no motive to serve God, or have any concern for his character and glory, but will choose to live a life of enmity to God, by serving himself and his own lusts. It is certain there never

was, and never will be, *such* a real Christian, though thousands have with the objector supposed it, and are hoping for heaven by living in the exercise of a selfish religion, which is abomination in the sight of God, and will certainly lead them to destruction.

The doctrine of the certain perseverance of all real Christians in a life of holiness to salvation, secured to them in the covenant of grace, is a comfortable and pleasing doctrine to the true Christian. He knows his own insufficiency, and absolute and constant dependence on God for all holy exercises and conduct, and that, if God should leave him to himself, he should fall into sin and ruin. And when he finds a promise in the covenant of grace, that all true Christians shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, and that where he has begun a good work he will carry it on to the day of complete redemption, he lays fast hold of it as the only ground of hope that he shall persevere unto salvation, and would not be without it for a thousand worlds. But the self-confident hypocrite, who never knew his own heart, but thinks he can stand in his own strength, and distinguish himself from others who have the same assistance which he has, and by his own exertions embrace the gospel and live a holy life (in which he himself, not God, determines whether he shall be saved or not) by his own independent obedience, or by the abuse of the assistance he has, — to such this doctrine is most displeasing, and they will oppose it with all their might, because it takes away their god in which they trust, their own selves, and makes their salvation altogether dependent on God from first to last. For the same reason they oppose the doctrines of the divine decrees and of election, as these represent men as wholly dependent on God, especially for salvation; as according to this he determines who shall be saved, and who shall not, independent of man, according to his own pleasure. This is the only reason that can be justly assigned for their displeasure at these doctrines, and their opposition to them; and if persons of this character do not trust in man, and rely on an arm of flesh, even themselves, — and that in a matter of the greatest importance and magnitude, infinitely more so than their own existence, or any other of their concerns, — it will be difficult, yea, impossible, to conceive what is meant by trusting in man. How is it possible, then, that they should escape the awful curse pronounced by God — "Thus saith the Lord, Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm"? (Jer. xvii. 5.)

7. It is objected that these doctrines, — of man's entire dependence on God in doing any thing towards his own sal-

vation, of election, and the certain perseverance of all true Christians, — if they be true, had better not be preached, since they will not be understood by people in general, and are very offensive to many, by which they are prejudiced against religion; and by many who believe them are abused to very bad purposes, and, on the whole, do much more hurt than good.

Answer. This objection is really against the Bible itself, and particularly against the text we are considering, in which these doctrines are all either expressed or implied, as has been shown. Therefore, the whole Bible, and more especially our text, is to be adduced as containing a complete answer.

If these doctrines are not to be preached, inculcated, or mentioned, why are they contained in the Bible? why has God published them to the world? If the preaching of these doctrines tends to do hurt, then their being published in the Bible, which is to be read by all, has an evil tendency. They who make this objection, who are not a few, would drop it immediately if they had any proper regard for the Bible, as it is levelled against divine revelation and the Author of it.

If these doctrines be not understood by any preachers or hearers, this must be their own fault; for nothing is revealed which may not be understood, so far as it is revealed, by the honest, attentive reader of the Bible, in the assiduous use of all the helps in his reach. And if they be not understood, the fault must be in the hearer or the preacher, or perhaps in both.

That these doctrines are improved to increase the prejudices of many against religion, and are abused by others to evil purposes, is no reason why they should not be taught, explained, and vindicated, — since this is an equal reason why none of the important truths of the Bible should be taught, — for there is no truth in divine revelation which is not liable to abuse, and has not been abused by men to their own hurt. It is no new thing for men to pervert the writings of inspiration to their own destruction. Shall they, therefore, be laid aside, and not studied and inculcated? Let the objector judge.

Let who will think these truths to be of little consequence, and not suitable to be maintained and preached, or doubt or disbelieve them, or abuse them to the worst purposes, yet they remain highly important and useful; they have been found to be so by thousands and millions: and the heart of every true Christian is formed upon them, or agreeable to them, whatever his speculations may be; and there is no other way to heaven than that which is marked out in our text. This leads to the next head of improvement.

SERMON VI.

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. — PHIL. ii. 12, 13.

III. THIS subject is to be improved in the use of *Examination.*

This is the most important and useful part of the subject to which we have attended. The text, as it has been considered and opened, and vindicated from objections, points out the only way to heaven, and exhibits the true character of every real Christian, and teaches with what views, exercises, and efforts he must work out his own salvation. But all this will be in vain to us if we do not apply it to ourselves, and in this light examine and try ourselves, whether we be real Christians, according to this description of a Christian, and walking in the narrow way to heaven.

They who are sincerely desirous to know their own state and character, and to determine from the best evidence whether they be real Christians or not, may be assisted in this most important inquiry by attending to the following particulars: —

1. Have you ever been convinced, and have you a clear, constant, and growing conviction of your utter insufficiency to will and to do any good thing, — unless God work in you to will and to do, — by reason of the natural depravity of your hearts, by which you were, in a moral sense, dead in trespasses and sins? — that if you should be left to yourselves, to follow your own will and choice, without the powerful, regenerating influences of the Spirit of God, you should certainly run on to destruction? and are, therefore, wholly dependent on God for every right motion of will, and all that which is right and good in you, even on his sovereign, undeserved grace? The Christian has a clear and powerful conviction of this in his own mind continually, and daily acknowledges it to God, and increases in a sense of the depravity of his own heart, and his constant dependence on God for divine influences to work in him every right motion of heart; and a view and sense of this truth attends all his exercises and conduct. And while he feels his constant dependence on God to will and do any thing that is right, he acquiesces in it, and humbly trusts in God, and cries to him for his assistance and grace.

Herein lies the foundation of the first and great difference between a true Christian and those who are not so. The

latter are strangers to this conviction and feeling, and, whatever their speculations may be, if they do or attempt any thing in religion, they do it in their own strength, and feel as if they had some sufficiency of their own to do good, and were not wholly dependent on God for every right motion of heart or exercise of will.

2. Do you feel a constant and cordial conviction that you are wholly blamable for the want of a disposition to will and do that which is necessary for your salvation, and for all opposition of will to this; that your insufficiency to work out your own salvation, and dependence on God to work in you to will and to do it, is no excuse for your not doing it; but that your want of a will to do it, and all opposite inclination, is altogether your own fault? Are you willing to be looked upon in this light, and disposed to confess this as your sin, and humble yourself in the sight of God for every thing in your heart and life which is not conformable to the holy law of God? It cannot be reasonably supposed that a true Christian, who has been convinced of his own sinfulness by an acquaintance with the law, and is a hearty friend to it, as perfectly right and good; who is a friend to Christ, who has obeyed this law, and died on the cross to magnify it and make it honorable, and to save his people from their sins, — that such a one should not condemn himself for every thing in his heart and life which in the least deviates from this law, and is not a perfect conformity to it; for not to do this is inconsistent with his character as a Christian.

3. When you are most attentive to, and feelingly sensible of, your own weakness and insufficiency, and of your dependence on God in the sense above described, is this so far from discouraging you, and disposing you to sit still and do nothing, that *then* you have the most ardent desires, and the greatest courage, zeal, and engagedness to prosecute and go through the work of a Christian, and work out your own salvation? This, which has been the matter of discouragement, uneasiness, and objection to multitudes, has a directly contrary influence with the Christian, and opens the only way in which he can have hope, and by it he is animated with zeal and courage to run the Christian race; and what others cannot feel to be consistent, or be pleased with, is to him plain and easy, and most satisfactory and pleasing, as most suited to glorify God, and promote the humility, holiness, and happiness of man. In this view, and in this way only, the gospel is to the Christian the wisdom of God and the power of God. Agreeably to this, St. Paul says, "When I am weak, then am I strong." "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me." That is,

when I have the greatest sense of my own weakness and insufficiency to the work before me, I feel the greatest strength and courage by trusting in the grace and power of Christ; I am then strong in the Lord and in the power of his might, and can with courage undertake and go through the most difficult and arduous work.

4. Are you influenced to will and do, and quickened and excited to religious exercises, in such a way and manner as naturally leads you to be sensible that these things take place by the grace and assistance of God, so that you are disposed to ascribe all to him, and not to yourselves? Do your own feelings and experience witness to your own mind that "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy"? It is, doubtless, God's way so to work in Christians by his Spirit as to lead them to be sensible that all originates from him, and to acknowledge him to be the worker of all good in them; and they can from their own experience adopt the words of Paul, and say, "By the grace of God I am what I am."

5. Are you indeed doing the work of a Christian, working out your own salvation in any measure in the manner which has been described? Do you make religion and the service of Jesus Christ and his interest your great, and really your only business? And do you make any progress, and abound more and more?

The real Christian is painfully sensible that he fails and comes unspeakably short in every thing, which he knows is to be attributed to his own depravity and the sin which dwelleth in him, so that when he would do good, evil (sin) is present with him, and the good which he would he does not; and this sinful defect, and the evil which attends him in all he does, is a grievous burden and matter of constant humiliation before God; and the more the Christian does, and the more zeal and engagedness he has in religion, the more sensible he is of his sinful defects; therefore, this increasing sensibility is no evidence that he is not working out his own salvation with fear and trembling, but, on the contrary, is a sign that he is a real Christian, and is willing and working. They who do the least, or, rather, nothing at all, in this work of a Christian, are commonly most insensible of their defects, and are disposed to think they are doing much, and have few or no painful defects to lament.

But though every Christian comes so lamentably short of what he ought, and heartily desires and wishes to do, which is matter of constant shame and humiliation, yet he is really working out his own salvation in the manner which has been

described in the preceding discourses, and is making this work his only business; and he must be supposed to gain skill and strength to prosecute this work, and grow in grace and in the knowledge of his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the longer he is in the Christian school and is going in the way to heaven. He, therefore, who is not in some good measure diligent in this business, and fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, is not steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, has no reason to think he has ever entered upon this work, or knows what it is to live the life of a Christian.

6. Do you live a life of prayer? The Christian, who is working out his own salvation with fear and trembling, feeling his own insufficiency, and constant dependence on God to work in him to will and to do, and having a lively sensibility of his dangerous situation, surrounded with numerous subtle, potent enemies, who are seeking his ruin, and beset with various and strong temptations to turn aside and offend God, and that he shall inevitably fall into destruction, unless God prevent it by his constant influences and sovereign grace, is constantly looking to God for safety and help, and expressing his only hope and trust in him, praying with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, watching thereunto with all perseverance. He will earnestly cry to him for his direction and assistance in every exigency and at all times, and call upon the name of the Lord as long as he lives.

A child on the side of a tremendous precipice, depending on his father to guide him in every step and hold him up by his hand, by which alone his fall and being dashed to pieces can be prevented, would keep his eye constantly on his father, and cry to him to help him from falling, and conduct him safe through all the dangers with which he feels himself surrounded. Or, should a child be in the midst of a wilderness with his father, filled with fierce beasts of prey ready to devour him, while he is without any strength to defend himself, and knows not one step of the way to a place of safety, and feels that, if he should be a minute without the help and guidance of his father, he should run directly into the mouth of some savage beast, or turn aside from the only way to escape death, he would constantly cry to his father for help and protection, who alone could save him; and if his father should be out of his sight but a few minutes, what a cry would he raise after him! and never cease till he got hold of his father's hand.

And shall not the Christian, who feels himself in circumstances of which those of the child now described are but a very faint representation, being infinitely more important and affecting, cry night and day unto his God and only Savior for

help, succor, and deliverance? Surely he will constantly, with cheerfulness, obey his invitation and command, as not only his duty but his greatest privilege, while he hears him saying, "Look unto me, my spouse, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards. Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me. Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. Pray always, and faint not; pray without ceasing," etc. And the more he loves God, and the stronger is his faith and trust in him, and his confidence in the certain and punctual fulfilment of all his promises, the more hearty, earnest, and fervent his prayers will be; for in this way he will express a sense of his dependence on God, and his love to him, and faith and trust in his promises.

The nominal Christian, who has no proper sense of his dependence on God, — as it has been explained, — but feels himself in a great measure sufficient to the work of a Christian, and has no real love to God or trust in his promises, and dependence upon him to work all his works in him both to will and to do, can live without much prayer from day to day; or, if he pray, it will be but a formal, cold business, in which there is no engagedness or heart. But this is not the character of a true Christian, who is working out his own salvation with fear and trembling, knowing that it is God which worketh in him both to will and to do. He casteth all his care upon God, and in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, makes known his requests unto God. Believing that they have a great High Priest, who is in heaven, Jesus, the Son of God, they come boldly, with the utmost freedom of access and of speech, unto the throne of grace, that they may obtain mercy, and find help in time of need.

7. Have you, after you have done all, no reliance on what you do to recommend you to God as less deserving of his displeasure, or more worthy of pardon of your sins, and of salvation, feeling that, if God should be strict to mark your iniquity against you, you cannot answer or stand before him, and must justly perish forever? Under this view and conviction, do you constantly fly to Christ, and trust in his atonement, which he has made by his blood, and in his righteousness for pardon and acceptance with God, feeling yourselves to be infinitely guilty and ill deserving? that, were it not for Christ and his worthiness, and your union to him and interest in his righteousness, you must sink into hell? and that nothing in you, or that you have done or can do, can be acceptable to God, unless you are accepted in the infinitely beloved and worthy Savior? And in this way, and under this sensible

conviction, whatsoever you do, do you do all in the name of Christ, asking all you petition for in his name, and hoping for acceptance and mercy for his sake alone? It has been shown that this is essential to the character of those who walk humbly with God and work out their own salvation with fear and trembling. He who attempts to work out his own salvation in any other way is really working out his own destruction.

8. On the whole, let all professing Christians seriously and with great care examine themselves, and inquire whether they be really walking in the narrow way to heaven described in the text; whether they have skill to discern and distinguish it from all others which have been devised by men, or that can be imagined; whether they know there are the strongest motives and greatest encouragements to work out their own salvation, while they are certain that they are wholly dependent on God for this, and shall do nothing unless he work in them to will and to do; and that by all they do they do not deserve the least favor, but remain as ill deserving as ever, and find themselves as zealous and as much engaged to do — while they know they can do nothing of themselves — as if they were self-sufficient and independent of God to work in them to will and do, and could merit their own salvation by what they do; whether their depravity of heart, and indisposition to do any good thing unless God work in them to will and do, be matter of shame and self-condemnation to them, having no excuse to offer for it, but take the whole blame to themselves, being disposed to justify God, should he leave them to perish in their sin, and always ready with pleasure to give him all the glory of their salvation, if he of his sovereign grace shall begin and carry on this work to perfection; whether they are willing to be in his hand, to dispose of them as he in his infinite wisdom and goodness shall see best, and rejoice that all men and all things shall be governed and disposed of so as to answer the wisest and best ends — thus always rejoicing in the Lord that he reigns without any possible control forever.

He who understands our text, and sees the truths expressed and implied in it to be perfectly consistent and harmonious, and heartily acquiesces in them, and in the view of these truths, and, on this plan, is constantly working out his own salvation with fear and trembling, is doubtless taught of God, and made wise unto salvation, which he will finally obtain through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But he who sits still or loiters with respect to this great work, from whatever motive, or is laboring to go to heaven in his own strength, independent of God, so as to be at heart

opposed to his salvation being determined by God, — and on this ground is in his heart an enemy to the doctrines of the decrees of God, of election, and the certain perseverance of all true Christians, — is in darkness until now, and knows not the only way of salvation. The Scripture warrants us in this conclusion, however uncharitable and censorious many may think it to be. We appeal to the Bible and to the day of judgment.

IV. This subject will be improved by urging the exhortation in the text. Let all who hope to be saved make it their only business to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling. There is no other way to heaven but this; and this is a work of life, which cannot be finished till death takes us out of the world. This is the fight of faith, by perseverance in which the Christian will lay hold of eternal life.

The least deviation from this narrow way, or neglect or loitering in this work, is unreasonable, and an abuse of the gospel, and tends to evil. In order to go in this way, the flesh, with the affections and lusts, must be crucified; selfishness and pride, with all the evil propensity which springs from them, must be watched against and crossed; for all these will lead the Christian aside from the right way, so far as they are regarded and gratified. A strong disposition to self-dependence, and dependence on some creature, in opposition to constant dependence on God alone, is implied in these lusts. And so much of this is in the Christian, that he is constantly exposed to fall by it, and often does so, in a degree. When the Christian is in a pious frame, and his religious affections are strong and vigorous, he is disposed to trust in his present disposition and feelings for what he hopes to will and to do in future; and when he trusts in this as a stock and sufficiency of his own for some future work, he always finds himself disappointed, and fails of willing and doing as he expected, because, in proportion to his thus trusting to himself, his heart departed from the Lord, and, in a degree, forgot that he depended every moment on God to work in him to will and to do. Would the Christian work out his own salvation, he must watch and pray against self-dependence in this way or in any other. If he trusts in any degree to ministers, books, the Bible, or any means, or special religious advantages, that these will help him in any measure, independent of the divine, immediate operation, working in him every right motion of heart, he gets so far out of the way, and cannot come right till he repent of his folly. Peter trusted to his own present feelings, and was self-confident when he said to Christ, "Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will

I never be offended. Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee." "I will lay down my life for thy sake." (Matt. xxvi. 33, 35. John xiii. 37.) Trusting to himself, he fell from his own steadfastness, and could not be recovered without deep and bitter repentance. Let all be hence warned not to be high minded, but fear; and let him who thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. When the Christian is weak, fears and trembles in a sense of his own insufficiency, and feels his dependence on God constantly to work in him to will and to do, then is he strong to run the race that is set before him, and work out his own salvation.

To what has been said, the following particulars may be added as motives to engage in and pursue this work: —

1. Consider how *great* this work is. There is none equal to it, or to be compared with it. It is to overcome self, sin, and Satan, — even all the powers of darkness, — principalities and powers, rulers of the darkness of this world, spiritual wickedness in high places. Nothing short of Omnipotence can strengthen you to perform it, even the mighty power of God, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand, far above all principality and power and might and dominion. At the same time that the consideration of the greatness of this work leads to fear and tremble, to feel our own insufficiency, and to trust in God alone for a will and strength to do it, it serves as a mighty motive to desire to engage in it, and go through, by the power and grace of Christ. The motive is great and strong in proportion to the magnitude of the work before us.

2. Consider the consequence of neglecting this work, or performing it. The consequence of the former is to perish forever, for none can be saved but those who in this way overcome. The consequence of the latter is to sit down with Christ on his throne, and reign with him forever.

3. Consider the abundant encouragement, and innumerable great and precious promises, which Christians have to strengthen and animate them in this work, and to trust in Christ to carry them through. They who trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be moved; they shall renew their strength — shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint.

4. Consider the pleasure and happiness there is in working out your own salvation with fear and trembling. It is not a slavish, servile work; there is pleasure in this fear and trembling, which is nothing more than true humility and trust in God. No man knows what true happiness is, who is not

cordially engaged in this work. And he who is thus working out his own salvation has true pleasure and happiness in his work: he has joy and peace in believing, and is going on to complete, everlasting rest and joy in the kingdom of Christ.

This subject will be concluded with an address to sinners who neglect the great salvation.

The words of the text are not directly and immediately addressed to you; yet they contain matter of instruction, conviction, admonition, and exhortation to you, to which it is of the greatest importance that you should attend.

You are here taught your sinful, depraved, undone state — that you are so under the dominion of evil propensities that you will not be persuaded and disposed to exercise one right volition or thought, unless God work it in you by his good Spirit, to do which he is under no obligation; and you are constantly provoking him not to do it, but to give you up to eternal destruction. Here you have set before you your guilt, misery, and danger, in a most clear and affecting light. At the same time you are taught that your neglect of salvation, and all that moral depravity, in the exercise of which you are sinning against Christ and running into ruin, is your own inexcusable, aggravated wickedness, of which you are continually guilty, and is enough to sink you down to the deepest hell; and will certainly do it, unless God shall exercise sovereign mercy to you, and you repent and turn, and are willing to work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

And as your opposition of heart to this, and even the neglect of this salvation, is altogether your own fault, for which you have no excuse, consisting in your own inclination and choice, heaven and all the blessings of it are opened and freely offered to your acceptance, and you are invited, exhorted, and commanded to work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, having a promise that in this way you shall certainly be saved.

All this is set before you and urged upon you in the discourses on this subject which you have heard. Your attention to these truths is, therefore, demanded by all the authority of Heaven; and you are required heartily to receive and comply with them, and thus to lay hold on eternal life, which is now set before you and offered to you as really as to any one else. Therefore, if you perish, it will be by your own inexcusable and greatly-aggravated fault. These truths are infinitely important and interesting to you, for you will be forever happy or miserable according as you cordially embrace or reject them.

Say not, "I am not elected, and therefore cannot be saved

let me do what I will, as the decrees of God are against me." This is horrid presumption, for you to meddle with and pretend to determine that which is secret, and act upon it. Besides, it is revealed, and certain, that if you perish you will perish as really and as much by your own inexcusable fault as if there were no decree of God concerning you. This plea and excuse will appear to be vain and unreasonable when the truth comes to light, and that it proceeded from a heart full of enmity against God, and, being silenced, it will serve to aggravate the destruction of those who make it. O, of what infinite importance, then, is it to you, that you should wholly lay it aside before it is too late!

Do not entertain the thought that you cannot embrace the gospel and work out your own salvation, and imagine that this is a good excuse for your not doing it. For this is taking upon you the character of the slothful servant, who thought to excuse himself for neglecting the right improvement of the talent which was committed to him, by saying, "Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strewed." If there ever was or can be a person of the character which Jesus here describes, thou art the man, and your excuse will be turned against you, and you will meet with the doom pronounced on such a servant: "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

It is true that you are under an inability to do any thing by which you shall be saved, which has been explained as consisting in the sinful inclinations of your own heart; and you depend entirely on God for a new heart, and he will give such a heart or not, according to his good pleasure, and will determine whether you shall be saved or not. But it has been fully shown that this kind of inability is so far from being an excuse for not doing, that it is the very thing wherein the sinner's criminality and blame consist; and to make this an excuse for not doing implies a great degree of stupidity and perverseness, and is replying against God in the same manner that the slothful servant is represented to do.

Do not give yourselves up to sloth and indifference in religion, and indulge your evil inclinations, in neglect of all concern about the salvation of your soul, because you think this is already determined by God and you cannot alter the case, therefore you will not trouble yourself about it. This is the certain way to determine that you never shall be saved, and are going in the way to destruction; for this is the certain way to perish forever, if you persist in it, as none can go to heaven in this careless way.

Besides, such a conclusion and practice is most unreasonable, and must proceed from amazing blindness and stupidity. It is a disposition of mind which is condemned as an evidence of the greatest stupidity and sottishness by all who exercise any reason and common sense in temporal concerns. If a man be accused of a capital crime, and is to be tried in a day or two, when it will be determined whether he shall be put to death or not, and such a man should appear to be perfectly unconcerned about himself and the issue of the case with respect to him, who could be found to justify him in this? Would not all join to condemn him as an unreasonable, stupid man? Or, should a person be condemned to death for some crime, and the day of his execution be fixed, could he be perfectly unconcerned and easy about his case and fate even till the moment of execution came? If this were possible, and such an instance should be known, all would cry out on him, as sunk below the reason, sensibility, and feelings of a man, being as thoughtless and stupid as a beast. How much more unreasonable, insensible, and stupid must he be who is upon the verge of eternity, and it must soon be determined whether he shall be unspeakably happy, or beyond all conception miserable forever, and yet has no concern about the matter, but is trifling away his time in carelessness about his eternal interest, and vain amusements! This is an instance of stupidity, sottishness, frenzy, or madness which cannot be described.

Do not, therefore, give way to such unreasonableness, stupidity, and infatuation, as to spend your time and strength in care and exertions about temporal things, while you neglect the utmost, constant attention to, and highest concern about, those infinitely important and weighty matters which hang upon every moment of your lives.

Do not entertain so good an opinion of yourselves as to think you are willing to be Christians, and that the reason why you are not is not the want of a willingness to embrace the gospel, and because you *will not* come to Christ for salvation, but from some other cause, for which you are not blamable.

Many who are under some concern about the salvation of their souls fall into this delusion, and think they are willing to come to Christ, and be Christians, if Christ were willing to receive them. Such are ignorant of their own hearts, and have no true idea of that which is implied in being a Christian, and really charge Jesus Christ and the gospel with falsehood; for in that he declares that whosoever will may come and be saved. In this way they overlook the true reason why they are not Christians, and shut their eyes to their own true char-

acter, guilt, and odiousness. It is of the greatest importance that this delusion should be removed.

Do not attempt to evade all conviction of the truth and concern about your salvation by flattering yourselves that you are in no present danger of destruction, and you shall have time enough hereafter to obtain salvation, though you neglect it now. Remember that you have no security from falling into hell one moment; and the voice of God and of reason to you is, "Make haste! Escape for thy life, lest thou be destroyed!"

And do not indulge a thought of your own sufficiency and moral strength to work out your own salvation, unless God work in you to will and to do. Many are so ignorant of themselves, and of the work of a Christian, as to imagine they are sufficient to begin and go through the work without feeling their dependence on God; and they think they are truly religious, and working out their own salvation, while they are only gratifying their own selfishness and pride, and are in the sight of God abominable and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.

There are others who are so confident of their own independent sufficiency to help and save themselves, when they shall set about it in earnest, that by this confidence in themselves they are led to indulge in neglect of religion and carnal security for the present; and by this delusion many are fastened down in sloth and neglect of their souls till it is eternally too late. Could they be persuaded to try their supposed strength in earnest, there would be hope that they would be convinced of their delusion, as many have been in this way thoroughly convinced and humbled; but so long as they cannot be awakened and roused to try their boasted strength, they are like to remain in the fatal delusion.

It is of infinite importance to you that you do not, on the one hand, presume upon your own strength and sufficiency to work out your own salvation, and, trusting in yourselves that you are righteous, depend upon obtaining salvation by your own righteousness, or, on this presumption of your own sufficiency, live in ease and security, at present, in the indulgence of your own corrupt inclinations, depending on yourselves for strength and help when it shall be necessary for you to be religious to escape destruction; or that you do not, on the other hand, live in ease and the neglect of salvation, from the consideration of your depravity and inability to save yourselves, and your dependence on God for this, imagining that this takes away all obligation and encouragement to embrace

the gospel and work out your own salvation. Both of these delusions equally lead to destruction.

May you realize the infinitely evil and dangerous state in which you are, and be excited to flee from the wrath to come, by laying hold of the hope set before you, knowing that salvation is freely offered to you, and heaven stands open for you, and you are invited to run for this prize, having at the same time the offer and promise of the Holy Spirit, and of all the assistance you want, if you will so far trust in God as to ask him for all this. O, sinners, why will ye die?

A SERMON.

THE LAW OF WORKS

AND

THE LAW OF FAITH.

A SERMON.*

THE LAW OF WORKS AND THE LAW OF FAITH.

Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay; but by the law of faith. — Rom. iii. 27.

The apostle Paul does in this epistle particularly state and explain the way in which sinners may obtain the favor of God and eternal salvation, which is opened by the gospel. There are but two possible ways of obtaining the favor of God and eternal life, which he mentions, viz., by the works of the law, or obedience to the law of God, and by faith in Jesus Christ. The former way he says is impossible to sinners; and if it were possible, it would be highly improper, and attended with evil consequences. Having proved that all men are sinners and guilty before God, he says, "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin. Because the law worketh wrath; and the salvation of sinners is not of works, lest any man should boast." The latter, therefore, he establishes as the only proper, wise, and possible way in which sinners may be justified and saved, and says, "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law; and it is of faith, that it might be by grace, by which boasting is wholly excluded."

In attending to these words of the text, it will be attempted to explain them by showing what is meant by the law of works, and what by the law of faith, and why boasting is excluded, not by the former, but by the latter, and then improve the subject in some useful remarks and inferences from it.

By the law of works is meant the original law or constitution, which requires perfect, persevering obedience, in order to have and continue to enjoy the favor and blessing of God, and which pronounces him accursed who is guilty of disobedience

* Written in the year 1800.

in one and the least possible instance. This law every rational creature is under obligation to obey. The holy angels were made under this law, and by a sinless, perfect obedience to it, during the whole time of their probation, they have obtained and enjoy the divine approbation, and the reward of eternal life. This is the constitution under which Adam and all his posterity were made; this is the law of works. Had the father of the human race continued perfectly to obey this law to the end of his time of trial, he would, by these his works, have obtained eternal life for himself and his children too; but, by transgressing this law of works, he fell under the curse of it, and laid the foundation of the ruin of all his children, by their falling into the same state, as *their* sinning was, by divine constitution, connected with his transgression.

And many of the sinful children of Adam have, and do, through their pride and ignorance of themselves, and of the nature, extent, and design of the divine law, seek and attempt to become righteous, and obtain pardon and salvation by the works of the law — their own obedience. Most of the Jews did so in the days of the apostles. They sought righteousness as it were by the works of the law, and went about to establish their own righteousness, and in this way they failed of obtaining righteousness, and remained as much under the curse of this law of works as if they had attempted no obedience to it; for all who in this way are of the works of the law, are under the curse of it; for it is written, "Cursed is every one who continueth not in all the things which are written in the book of the law to do them." This way to life is forever shut against all the sons of Adam; for they have all transgressed it, and by this have rendered it forever impossible to obtain the righteousness of it by their own works and obedience. It is natural, however, for fallen man, Gentiles as well as Jews, to seek a righteousness by their obedience to this law, and to gratify their pride and disposition to trust and boast in themselves and their own righteousness; and numbers beyond our calculation in the Christian world have taken, and are still taking, this sure road to destruction, rather than to give up and renounce that boasting, which must be effectually destroyed in order to embrace the gospel.

By the law of faith is meant the gospel institution and dispensation, in which provision is made for the pardon, justification, and salvation of sinners who are under the condemnation and curse of the law; not by any works of righteousness which they have done or can do, to take off the curse of the law, or to recommend themselves to this favor and blessing, but purely on the account of the atonement, righteousness

and worthiness of Christ, in which they become interested so as to avail, on their behalf, to deliver from all the evil they deserve, and procure all the good they want, by faith in him, or believing on his name.

It being of great importance that all should have right and clear conceptions of this subject, it is proper and useful to give a more particular description of these two laws — the law of works and the law of faith. This may be done to the best advantage, perhaps, by considering wherein they agree with each other, and in what respects there is a difference and opposition of one to the other, and how not the former, but the latter, excludes boasting.

First. It is to be considered and shown wherein there is an agreement between these two laws, and what is as true of one as of the other, and is common to them both.

1. Holiness or obedience is necessarily implied and exercised in compliance with each and either of these laws, and in order to be interested in the promises and blessings which they contain.

The law of works requires perfect and persevering holiness and obedience, in order to enjoy the blessings of it. The least sin cuts a person off from all the promised good of this law, and subjects him to the curse of it, without any possible remedy by that law, as has been before observed.

And a compliance with the law of faith, or the covenant of grace, which is the same, implies holy exercise or true obedience; and this is absolutely necessary in order to be interested in the promises and blessings of this law and covenant.

That faith from which this law or covenant has its denomination, and in the exercise of which this law is complied with and fulfilled, and to which all the promises it contains are made, implies holiness of heart, and is itself a holy exercise. This being an important point, and denied by many, so much evidence of it from Scripture and reason will here be produced as it is hoped will be sufficient to establish the truth of it to the conviction of every unprejudiced mind.

That faith which discerns and believes the truth of the gospel from a view of the moral excellence and wisdom of it, and sees the character of Christ to be divinely excellent and beautiful, is not a mere speculative faith, confined to the understanding, exclusive of taste and exercise of heart, and cordial approbation. Moral excellence and beauty is not, and cannot be, the object of mere intellect, as distinguished from taste and discerning of heart; therefore, a real sight of moral excellence and beauty, or loveliness, necessarily implies love of that excellence and beauty; and these cannot be distinguished

or separated one from the other, for they are really one and the same thing. Hence it is demonstrably certain, that the faith which discerns the gospel to be true and excellent, or that internal evidence which renders it most worthy of belief, implies a discerning taste and relish of divine excellence and beauty, which is a virtuous disposition and exercise of heart, and is real holiness of heart, if there be in nature any such thing.

But that saving faith implies, and essentially consists in, a holy exercise of heart, in embracing the gospel as excellent and holy, and worthy of all acceptation, a cordial approbation of Christ and his character, and trusting in him, is abundantly evident from the Scripture, as well as from the reason and nature of the case.

The following passages, among many others which might be mentioned, afford an undeniable proof of this:—

Believing on Christ and receiving him is mentioned as one and the same. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." Coming to Christ and believing on him is mentioned as the same thing. "Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow living waters." Receiving Christ and coming to him are holy exercises of heart; for the character of Christ is so perfectly holy, that it is impossible that an unholy heart should be pleased with it; and none can cordially come to him and receive him but in the exercise of holy love to him. Christ said to the Jews, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent;" and proceeds to speak of coming to him, and eating his flesh and drinking his blood, as being the same with believing on him. (John vi. 29–58.) He said to the Jews, "I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you;" and then proceeds to tell them that this was the only reason why they believed not on him, and did not receive him. "How can ye believe who receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?" In these words, it is asserted that none can believe on him unless his heart be friendly to God and to him, and that it is impossible that any one should believe on Christ who is an impenitent enemy of God; which could not be true, if faith did not imply holy exercises of heart. (John v. 40, 44.) That faith in Christ implies holiness of heart, and is a holy exercise, is asserted by Christ in his discourse with Nicodemus: "He that believeth on the Son is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already. And this is the condemnation, that

light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light." (John iii. 18–21.) If every one that doeth evil, hateth the light, and will not come to it, and loves darkness rather than light, is condemned, and he that believeth on Christ is not condemned, then believing is coming to the light and loving it, or receiving the truth in the love of it, and doing the truth, or conforming to and practising it, in which holiness consists. Surely nothing can be plainer, and more strongly asserted, than this is in these words.

Believing on Christ is commanded as a duty, and, therefore, must be an exercise of the heart, and a holy exercise; for nothing can be the subject of command but the heart or will, and nothing was ever commanded by God but holiness, and nothing else can be duty. Christ preached, saying, "Repent, and believe the gospel." He said to his disciples, "Ye believe in God; believe also in me." He said to the Jews, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." The apostle John says, "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." Therefore, believing on Christ is called "the obedience of faith," and obeying Christ is the same with believing on him. "And being made perfect, he became the Author of eternal salvation to all them that *obey* him." The apostle Paul observes that the just *lives* by his faith; and says, "I *live* by the faith of the Son of God." If faith was that by which he lived, it was his spiritual, Christian life, which certainly is Christian holiness. He therefore says, "Faith worketh by love." Love is the sum of true holiness, but this is the efficacious, operative nature and life of faith, so that the faith is wholly dead and inactive, the life and active nature of which is not love.

The apostle Paul says, "Abraham was strong in faith, giving glory to God." If faith be not friendly to God, to the divine character, it does not, it cannot, give any glory to God, however strong it may be; but friendship to God is true love to God, and is a holy exercise of heart. Accordingly, the apostle James, speaking of Abraham believing God, says, "By this he obtained the character of the friend of God." If there were no love or holiness in saving faith, then an impenitent enemy of God might have as much of it, and be as strong in faith, as Abraham, or any other man, and that, too, without any true discerning or sight of the true character of Christ and spiritual things. "For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light;" which is true of every

impenitent, unregenerate person. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Therefore, whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, or has saving faith, is born of God — has a new and holy heart given him of God; for with such a heart the spiritual man discerneth spiritual things, and believeth unto righteousness.

Much more evidence might be produced from Scripture to prove that saving faith is real gospel holiness; but as what has already been said on this point does make it sufficiently clear, it is needless to add any more proof that, according to the law of faith, holiness is as necessary in order to an interest in the promises and blessings of it as it is according to the law of works; which is the proposition proposed to be proved.

2. The holiness which is necessary in a compliance with the law of works and the law of faith consists in conformity to the same law or rule of duty. It is, therefore, the same kind of holiness, as there is but one law and rule of holiness. All holiness consists in love to God and our neighbors, which, though expressed in different words, and exercised in a different manner and circumstances, and to answer different purposes, yet it is essentially one and the same thing, and is conformity and obedience to the same law.

Second. It is to be considered wherein these two laws differ and are opposed to each other.

This may be stated and explained in the following particulars: —

1. According to the law of works, the perfectly holy and obedient offer to God their holiness and works of obedience as the price of the favor and acceptance of God, and the reason of their having his approbation and rewards; and God accepts and rewards them, out of respect to their obedience and good works, as a testimony of his love of holiness and pleasure in their obedience to him. Thus the holy angels were justified by their works: their perfect holiness and obedience was the price of the favor they obtained of God. They trusted in their own righteousness to recommend them to God's acceptance, and the benefits of justification and eternal life; and, in bestowing these upon them, God testified his approbation of their character and works.

The law of faith is directly the reverse of this. It opens a way for the pardon, justification, and eternal life of *sinners*, who have fallen under the curse of the law, and are forever cut off from a possibility of being justified by the law of works. According to the law of faith, sinners are pardoned

and justified by the atonement, righteousness, and merit of Jesus Christ; and the holiness which they exercise is so far from recommending them to the least favor on account of their moral worth and excellence, that it wholly consists in what is implied in *receiving* these blessings, and all they want as a free gift to the infinitely guilty and ill deserving, without money or price, from the hands of an infinitely gracious and bountiful Benefactor.

By faith the sinner comes to Christ for all he wants, sensible that by sin he has undone himself, and may justly be cast off by God into eternal destruction; he confesses his sins and ill desert, and heartily approves of the law of God which condemns and curses him, as just, good, and excellent, worthy to be maintained and honored. He highly approves of the character of Christ, in seeking and promoting the honor of God, by vindicating and honoring the law which sinners had transgressed and trampled under foot, by suffering the curse of it himself, in dying on the cross and obeying it perfectly. He is pleased with the way of salvation by Christ, in which the sinner is humbled and saved by free grace, and not by works of righteousness which he has done or can do; and he is greatly pleased with the deliverance from all sin, and that perfect holiness which Christ will bestow on all who believe in him; and he is satisfied with that heaven and happiness, that glorious immortality, which Christ has brought to light, and will cause all believers fully and eternally to possess, as his purchase and free gift to them, though in themselves infinitely unworthy and ill deserving. Thus the believer comes to Christ as the apostle Paul did, desiring not to be found in his own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.

This is the great, capital, and most striking difference and opposition between the law of works and the law of faith, which, it is presumed, will be clearly understood by every judicious, attentive person, and appear to be of great importance to be made and always kept in mind.

It may be useful, however, to some, further to explain and illustrate this interesting and important point by the parable of the elder son and the prodigal. The latter, having rendered himself guilty, odious, and wretched, by leaving his father's house, and foolish conduct, when his eyes were opened, and he saw how guilty, wretched, and undone he was, and that all he wanted for his relief was to be had in his father's house, he determined to go and cast himself upon the goodness and mercy of his father, confessing his folly and sin in abusing his father and leaving his house, and his utter unworthiness of the

least favor. In this, and in receiving all he wanted from the free, undeserved kindness of his parent, was exercised and expressed as real love to him and his family as his elder brother had done, if he were as good and obedient as he represented himself to be. The latter recommended himself to his father's approbation and favor by his constant obedience and good deeds; the prodigal was covered with shameful guilt, unworthiness, and ill desert, and humbly and gladly receives all that is bestowed upon him as a free gift to an unworthy creature, who might justly have been left to perish without the least relief, having nothing to recommend him to favor, but every thing to the contrary. The one brings and offers his works of obedience as the reason why he should be favored and rewarded, or as the price by which he had purchased the blessings he desired and expected; the other has nothing but shame, guilt, and wretchedness, and seeks and accepts of his father's kindness in receiving him to his favor, and all the privileges, enjoyments, and honors of his family, as a free gift to a most ill-deserving son, who could make no compensation for the injury he had done. But in his friendly thought he had of his father, in his returning hence to him, confessing his sin and unworthiness of any favor, and cordial acceptance of offered mercy, and gladly coming into his father's house and family, he exercised as real love and friendship to his parent and his family, and to the laws, business, and enjoyments of his house, as did the elder son; and yet their love and friendship was exercised and expressed in very different and opposite ways, according to their different and opposite state and circumstances.

But the difference and opposition between these two laws of works and faith in other respects, which are implied in or do arise from that already mentioned, though not so great and important, yet must be noticed, as necessary in order fully to understand the subject to which we are attending.

2. None can be justified and obtain eternal life by the law of works unless he is perfectly obedient and holy, without the least sin or defect.

But by the law of faith the least degree of holiness exercised by a sinner in believing in Christ, and coming to him, and trusting in him for pardon and salvation, obtains justification and the promise of eternal life, while he is yet attended with a great degree of unholiness and sin. The reason of this difference is, because by the law of works a creature is justified by his own works or holiness, which, therefore, must be perfect; for by the least sin he falls under the curse of the law, and can never after obtain any blessing by it. "For as many

as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all the things which are written in the book of the law to do them." But by the law of faith the sinner is not justified by his own works or holiness, but wholly by the merit and righteousness of Christ. The least exercise of holiness by which a sinner accepts of Christ offering himself to him, and comes to him for pardon, righteousness, and complete redemption, interests him in all the blessings Christ has obtained for sinners, and in all the promises of the covenant of grace. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him who sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life."

This leads to observe another difference between these two laws.

3. By the law of works, a creature cannot be justified until he has persevered in perfect obedience to the end of the time of his probation; but by the law of faith the sinner is justified, and interested in all the promises of the gospel, and made an heir of eternal life, upon the *first act* of faith in Christ. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; he shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." Saving faith is indeed a persevering faith, so that he who once believes will continue to believe to the end of life. His faith shall never fail; not because it is in its own nature a persevering faith, or from the power and sufficiency of the believer, but because God has promised, in the covenant of grace, that he who once believes, to whom he has given faith to lay hold of and embrace this covenant by believing on Christ, shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. The first act of faith being in this sense and manner a persevering faith, the promise is made to believing, even the very first act of it; and it is proper that this should bring into a state of justification, and give a title to eternal life, as the first act of faith is the beginning of an everlasting union to Christ, in whom the believer has everlasting righteousness and strength.

4. Though the holiness of the law of works and the law of faith be the same in nature and kind, consisting in obedience to the same, and conformable to the revealed will of God, yet, owing to the state and circumstances of the sinner, and the different way and manner of obtaining justification by the exercise of holiness, which has been described, there is a real and great, though circumstantial, difference in the exercise of the same holiness. The sinner, infinitely guilty, ill deserving, and wretched, exercises his love to God and his law, and to

Christ the Mediator, in coming to and trusting in Christ, and receiving from him deliverance from the infinite evil he deserves, and from all sin, and accepting of all the good he wants and is capable of enjoying to all eternity, as a free, undeserved gift. He has a greater sense of the infinite goodness and free grace of God, and feels more dependent on this, and more indebted to God, and under greater obligations to him than the holy angels who have never sinned can; and, consequently, the redeemed exercise a greater degree of humility, and a more ardent and sweet love of gratitude, and render a higher tribute of praise to God, their Redeemer and Savior, than they are capable of who have never sinned; therefore, the redeemed from among men are represented as singing a new song before the throne of God, which none but they could learn.

THIRD. It is to be considered how and why all boasting is excluded by the law of faith, as it has been explained.

It is not implied in this that the law of works, when rightly understood and perfectly obeyed, affords any ground of boasting in a bad sense, or of sinful boasting, which is meant here. The holy angels, who are justified, and have obtained the reward of eternal life by the law of works, have no ground for boasting. They have no pride, and do not glory in themselves, in their own obedience and works, but in the Lord, in his munificence and glorious character. But this law of works is not suited to the sinner, to obtain justification and life by it, for he has fallen under the curse of it, and is forever excluded from the righteousness of it in his own person; and to suppose a sinner can be justified by any obedience or works he can perform, is to set him infinitely higher than the place and state he is in, and to dishonor and degrade the law; and for a sinner to attempt this, is a most daring instance of pride and self-confident boasting; and were it possible that a sinner could obtain the favor of God and justification by any obedience or holiness of his own, and out of respect to the worth and amiableness of that, this would please and flatter his pride, and nothing could prevent his haughty boasting of himself and his own good works. And this suits the heart of proud man; he naturally seeks to be justified by his own works, if he seeks it at all, that he may have something to boast of, by recommending himself to the favor of God by his own good deeds, being ignorant of himself, of his own character, and of God and his law.

Thus the Jews rejected the law of faith, and followed after righteousness, and obtained it not, because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. They, being ignorant of God's righteousness, went about, or attempted, to

establish their own righteousness. And many thousands and millions of Gentiles in the Christian world have stumbled at that stumbling stone, — the law of faith, which excludes boasting, — and have sought, and are now seeking, to be saved by the law of works; how many millions, none can tell! And perhaps there is not, nor ever has been, one of the sons or daughters of Adam who has enjoyed the light of divine revelation, and has in any measure or way sought to be saved, who has not in a greater or less degree made this wicked and dangerous attempt. Happy are they who have been cured of boasting by embracing the law of faith.

What has been said in describing the law of faith is sufficient to show that it excludes all boasting. The sinner in this way is received to favor, is justified and saved, not on account of any works he has done, or ever will do, and is not recommended to favor by any worthiness or holiness he has, but is considered, as in himself, as poor and naked, wretched, and miserable, infinitely guilty, and deserving to be cast into hell forever; and all the favor he receives is a free, undeserved gift and bounty, yea, bounty to the most ill deserving. Where is boasting, then? What has he to boast of but guilt, ill desert, poverty, and wretchedness?

And all this is not only true, and he is viewed in this light by God, agreeably to his holy law, but the sinner is made to feel and acknowledge this, and cannot believe on Christ and come to him by faith unless he has a clear conviction of his own vile, odious character, and feels that he has no worthiness to recommend him to the least favor, but is infinitely far from it; that he is so unworthy and infinitely guilty and ill deserving, that he may be justly hated by God, and cast into endless destruction. Thus the sinner, in complying with the law of faith, even in the first and every act of faith in Christ, humbles himself in the sight of God, while he is made in a sense to annihilate himself before God, yea, to feel that he is infinitely worse than nothing. And all his holiness, and every right exercise of mind, consists in a hearty acknowledgment of this, and thus humbling himself, and approving of the character of Christ, and the way of justification and salvation by him, which is the law of faith, and in views and exercises which are implied in this. Thus all pride and disposition to boast is counteracted and destroyed, the sinner abases himself, and rejoices to exalt free, sovereign grace, when and so far as he believes in Christ, and is pleased with the law of faith; and the more holy and obedient he is in conforming to this law, the more humble he is, and farther from all disposition to boast. Thus all boasting is entirely and forever excluded by the law of faith.

IMPROVEMENT.

I. We learn from what has been observed on this subject that they make a great mistake, and have espoused a dangerous and hurtful error, who believe and assert that if faith or believing in Christ in order to justification is a virtuous or holy act, or implies any real goodness, then the sinner has something to recommend himself which is of real worth, of which he has reason to boast, and must be acceptable to God, and, therefore, has no need of the merits of Christ and free grace in order to be justified. They, therefore, contend that to assert that a sinner must exercise any holiness previous to his justification, and in order to it, and that faith is a holy act, is entirely to subvert the gospel, and lays a foundation for boasting, and flatters the pride of man. Of these there have been, and now are, not a few in all parts of the Protestant world.

What has been said on this subject serves to show how unreasonable and contrary to the truth this notion is, and the evil tendency of it. But it may be useful and of importance to review some things which have been mentioned in the preceding discourse, by which the error and absurdity of this opinion will be abundantly exposed and confuted.

1. The sinner is under the curse of the holy, righteous, and good law of God, which pronounces him to be a hateful, accursed creature, deserving to lie under the divine displeasure and wrath forever. Every transgressor of this law is under this curse and in this state, whatever holy obedience he had performed, and how long soever he had continued perfectly holy before his sin. His transgression, even one instance of it, totally obliterates and annihilates his preceding holiness, so that it cannot have the least influence to prevent the curse coming upon him, or alleviate it in any degree, but he is as odious and guilty, and as much the object of God's displeasure for his transgression, as if his previous holiness never had existence; which cannot be reckoned in his favor in any respect or degree without counteracting the law of God, and setting it aside in favor of the sinner who by it is cursed. And it is the same with regard to any future holiness and obedience. If the sinner repent and turn to obedience, though ever so perfect and long continued, this would not in the least degree atone for the sin of which he had been guilty, or remove the curse which the law has fixed upon him for his sin; and, therefore, could not be more acceptable to God than if he had not obeyed, or than his obedience before he sinned, and cannot be

the reason and ground of his receiving any favor from God, as after obedience is as much obliterated and rendered of no avail to recommend to any favor, by his sin, as his obedience before he sinned, it being equally contrary to the law, which pronounces him accursed, to regard and accept or show any favor for his after obedience, as for the former, and it cannot be done without vacating and setting it aside as not worthy of regard.

This is the plain law of God, which curses every one who continueth not to obey it in all things which it requires, and holds him under this curse, notwithstanding all the obedience he had paid to it before he sinned, or any obedience after that. The law affords no remedy or help, or grants any thing better than what is contained in the curse. This is the law of God. It is his voice to all his creatures who are moral agents. It is the language of his heart, which he will never counteract or contradict in words or conduct. He views the sinner in the light in which his law sets him, and will treat him accordingly, so long as he remains under the curse of it, and is not delivered from it in a way which is perfectly consistent with it, and in which as much regard is paid to it as if the sinner remained under the curse of it forever.

Therefore, whatever repentance and approbation of the law which curses him, and love to God, the sinner exercises before he is delivered from the curse by actually coming to Christ and believing on him, does not in any degree remove his guilt, or render him less deserving of the curse, and cannot recommend him to the least favor; but he is in the sight of God as much accursed and the object of his displeasure, and in this sense as truly ungodly, as he was before, and as if he had no such exercises of love and repentance, as they cannot be reckoned in his favor so as in the least to remove the curse. And whatever repentance, and love to God and his law, or holiness, is necessary in order to come to Christ, and is exercised in coming to him and believing on him, this cannot, in itself considered, recommend the sinner to favor, or render him less unworthy or less accursed; but as by this the sinner lays hold of Christ, and is united to him, he comes within the reach of his merit and worthiness, so as by him who has been made a curse he may, consistent with the law, be delivered from the curse of it, and obtain all the favor which he wants. And being thus by Christ delivered from the curse of the law, and pardoned and justified by virtue of his atonement and righteousness, his person and his holy exercises of faith and love become acceptable to God through Jesus Christ, to whom he is united. God may now be just, and maintain and honor

his righteous law, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus, he being made accepted in his beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased.*

The reason of all this, — why the sinner's holiness before or after he has once sinned cannot be acceptable and reckoned in his favor, or in any degree remove the curse of the law; and whatever holiness he may exercise previous to his union to Christ, and is necessary in order to his coming to Christ, and actually forming this vital union to him, cannot render him acceptable to God, or less unworthy and accursed; and why he is totally unacceptable, as ungodly and cursed by God, till he is actually united to Christ, and can be accepted only in the worthiness of this beloved Son of God, — the reason of this is plain and easy to be seen.

The transgression of the law of God in the least single instance is rebellion against a Being infinitely great, powerful, wise, just, and good, who has absolute and unlimited right

* This serves to fix the true and plain meaning of the apostle's words: "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt: but to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted to him for righteousness." (Rom. iv. 4, 5.) By *him that worketh* is meant him who by his works of obedience recommends himself to favor and the reward of eternal life, and in this sense earns the reward by the price of his obedience; which no creature can do, except those who are perfectly innocent and holy, as has been observed in explaining the law of works. He who worketh not is the sinner, who neither has nor can have any works to recommend to the least favor; who is convinced of this, and makes no attempt to do any thing in this view and to this end; who feels that he is justly accursed, and under the displeasure of God, and deserves nothing better than everlasting destruction, being an ungodly rebel against God, and wholly unrighteous. As such he looks to Christ, and believeth on him, and cordially receives him and trusts in him for righteousness; who pardons and justifieth such unrighteous, ungodly, infinitely guilty, hell-deserving sinner as he feels and confesses himself to be.

They who hold the tenet to which the inference under consideration is opposed lay much stress upon the word *ungodly* in this passage, as if it denoted a sinner altogether destitute of the least friendly disposition towards God and Christ, being an impenitent enemy to God. But though such are often meant in the Scripture by the ungodly, yet it does not follow that precisely this idea is always to be denoted by this word. It has been shown in what sense every unpardoned, unjustified sinner is properly denominated ungodly; and this appears to be the sense in which the apostle uses it, from the connection and context. And understanding it as they do, makes the apostle to say that a sinner, with a hard, impenitent heart, full of enmity to God and to Christ, and the way of salvation by him, and justification by free grace, may and does believe on Christ, receive and trust in him for justification and salvation, which he at the same time abhors with his whole heart. This is to make him assert, with themselves, that which is most absurd and absolutely impossible. It is, therefore, most certain the apostle did not use this word here in the sense which they put upon it, but in a sense perfectly agreeable to the subject of which he treats, and the point he is proving, which is naturally and easily understood by the unprejudiced and discerning; being consistent with himself, with other Scripture, and with the clearest reason.

and authority to command and give law to his creatures; they are, therefore, under infinite obligation to perfect obedience; and, consequently, a violation of this obligation can be no less than an infinite crime, or an infinite moral evil. Besides, he who rebels against God has a disposition and will to dethrone him, and put an end to his law, authority, and moral government, and introduce infinite confusion and misery through the whole universe; and his conduct tends to this, and would actually effect it were it possible, and were it not counteracted and prevented. Every sin, therefore, must be an infinite evil, in the nature and tendency of it. There is no moral truth more demonstrably clear and certain than this; and this is a truth on which many other moral truths depend, which relate to the law of God and his moral government, as we shall see.*

Sin being thus an infinite moral evil, no temporary sufferings of the sinner, or of any mere creature, can make the least degree of atonement for it, so as in any measure to alleviate or deliver him from the curse of the law. And it is equally certain that no holiness of a mere creature can avail to recommend him who has once sinned to the least favor. Though the sinner had been perfectly obedient and holy a thousand years before he sinned, this is but a finite moral good, and, therefore, the infinite moral evil of which he has been guilty infinitely overbalances his finite holiness, so that it weighs nothing in the opposite scale, and does no more to lighten or take off the curse than if it never had existence. And this is equally true of any obedience which the sinner should perform, after he had once sinned, as has already been observed; it has no tendency to take off the curse, and cannot recommend him to any favor, or be the least ground or reason of his being considered and treated any better or otherwise than as one who is justly cursed, unworthy of any favor, and deserving all the evils of the curse. And, therefore, it would be unreasonable, and acting contrary to the law, to consider and treat him otherwise, or show him any favor out of respect to his obedience.

Thus it appears certain, that it is impossible that the holiness of a creature who has once sinned should be accepted as a reason of his having any favor, and being in any respect delivered from the curse of the law, as the evil of his sin

* The penalty threatened in the law of God to every transgression, which is endless punishment, has its foundation on the infinite evil of sin, and is a demonstration that it is an evil of such magnitude; for, if sin were not infinitely criminal, it would not deserve an infinite punishment, nor would it be threatened. Christ explains the meaning of the curse or penalty of the law, when he says, "Depart *ye cursed* into everlasting fire." They who deny the infinite evil of sin cannot vindicate or understand the divine law, or the gospel, which is founded upon it.

infinitely outweighs all the moral good of which he is capable, and sinks it into nothing, so as to render it wholly unacceptable, consistent with the divine law, were it true that such obedience or moral good might take off the curse of the law, and render the sinner acceptable, did it overbalance, or were it equal to, the evil of his sin. But even this is not true. The curse of the law denounces infinite natural evil as the punishment which sin deserves, and, therefore, cannot be taken off or removed by any thing but suffering. No degree of obedience or moral good, be it ever so much or so great, can make any atonement for one the least sin, so as to deliver the sinner from the curse. Therefore, Christ himself was made a curse, that by suffering the evil of the curse, the just suffering for the unjust, he might deliver the sinner who believes in him from the curse, and open the way for him to come to God with acceptance.

From all this it appears that the opinion under consideration, — that if the sinner is recovered to any degree of holiness antecedent to his justification by the merit and righteousness of Christ, and in order to it he has whereof to glory, and has a righteousness of his own which is acceptable to God, so that he stands in no need of the righteousness of Christ in order to be justified, — that this opinion is a great and dangerous error, most contrary to the reason and nature of things and the holy law of God, and really perverts and makes void both law and gospel. Therefore, they who hold and persist in this error are in truth, and in a high degree, Antinomians, as their doctrine makes the law wholly void in the most important and essential branch of it. And their doctrine on this point is totally anti-Christian. For the law is in such a sense the foundation of the gospel, that if the former be perverted and made void, the latter becomes unintelligible and useless. If sinners may be delivered from the curse of the law, and obtain favor and justification, by becoming in any degree holy and obedient, then they may be saved without Christ and the gospel. "If there had been a law which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law; and if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." (Gal. ii. 21; iii. 21.)

We hope that men — some of them, at least — who hold and propagate these Antinomian and anti-Christian doctrines in theory have better hearts than heads, and love and embrace the truth in the former, while they believe that which is gross and dangerous error with the latter.

2. Were the preceding observations not true, — which is, indeed, an impossible supposition, — and could the sinner, on becoming perfectly holy and obedient, be delivered from the

curse of the law and admitted to the acceptance and favor of God, and his past sin not be remembered against him out of respect to his present holiness, consistent with the law of God, yet this does not touch the case of a sinner, who only exercises so much of a right disposition as is necessarily implied in approving of the character and law of God and of Christ, and in coming to him for pardon, justification, and life. He may exercise such a degree of holiness consistent with his having much more sin than holiness at the same time, which is undoubtedly true of every sinner who embraces the gospel, and of every Christian as long as he lives in this world. A sinner who becomes friendly to God, and embraces the gospel, has such low and sinfully-deficient exercises of love, and so much of that which is contrary and positive wickedness, that, aside from his guilt for former sins, his present character, considered in itself, has much more evil than good, and, on the whole, is worse than nothing, and cannot be an object of the complacency and favor of God, but rather of his displeasure and curse; and he stands in as much need of favor and justification by free grace through the righteousness of Christ as if he had no holiness, and were altogether an enemy to God; for he has no money or price to purchase this favor, and is continually running more in debt. And to plead his good character as proper to recommend him to the least favor would be highly displeasing to God, and must be so to every good man, whether done by the sinner himself, or any other person.

They who make the objection under consideration, who think themselves Christians and that they do exercise holiness, may be asked whether they think this has raised them above the need of free grace and justification by the righteousness of Christ, or at least do not stand in so much need of it as they should if they had no degree of holiness. If they answer in the affirmative, they are not such Christians as was the apostle Paul. If they answer in the negative, and say that they are as dependent on the righteousness of Christ for justification and all favor as if they were wholly unholy, and they expect to be saved by free grace as much as they could be if they could be saved in their sins without any holiness, — that they are far from having any thing to boast of, and the more conformed they are to God in holiness, or the more they see God and love him, the more they are disposed to abase and humble themselves before him, and feel their need of such a Savior as Jesus Christ, — then by this confession they entirely give up their objection, and grant that, whatever holiness the sinner may exercise previous to his justification, and in his

coming to Christ for it, this does not make him the more deserving of favor, nor does he stand in less need of justification by free grace through the worthiness of Christ; and it will be so far from disposing him to be proud, and boast, that it will bring him to humble himself at the foot of sovereign, free grace, which humility will increase as he shall grow in grace and in the knowledge of his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

But further to confute, if that be possible, and show how false and absurd the tenet is which we are opposing, it must be observed, —

3. The holiness which the sinner exercises, in believing on Christ and coming to him for all he wants, is so far from being the ground of pride and boasting, or promoting and encouraging this, that it directly counteracts and destroys such a disposition. The sinner's heart is naturally full of pride, and a disposition which is gratified in self-exaltation and boasting; and nothing can cure him of this reigning disposition, and in any degree destroy his pride, but a change of heart by the Spirit of God, by which pride receives a deadly wound, and he is disposed to humble himself in the sight of God. And the grace he hereby receives and exercises consists in discerning and confessing his sinful, lost state — that the law he has transgressed is just and good — that he is infinitely vile and ill deserving — that God may justly send him to endless destruction at any time — that he has nothing that can deserve or recommend him to the least favor, but every thing in every respect infinitely to the contrary: and in this view and sense of his own character he comes to Christ as a poor, infinitely guilty, and wretched sinner, and begs for mercy, not for his own sake, or for any thing he has done or ever shall do, but for the sake of what Christ has suffered and done, pleased and hoping to be pardoned and received to favor by free, undeserved grace through Jesus Christ, desiring forever to be abased and humbled, and that the most undeserved, sovereign grace may be exalted and honored in his salvation.

Where is pride and boasting, then? It is effectually excluded and destroyed by the exercise of that grace and holiness by which the sinner approves of the character and law of God, condemns himself as justly deserving eternal misery and nothing better, and looks to Christ for undeserved, free pardon and favor to an infinitely guilty, odious, undeserving, wretched beggar. He who can believe that such exercises, which are according to the law of faith, are agreeable to the pride of man, and will lead to boasting, may with as good reason believe that humility is pride, and self-abasement is self-exaltation.

And, besides all this which has been now said to confute this error, it must be observed that they who exclude all holiness from saving faith — by which the sinner is justified, lest if it were a holy exercise he would have reason to boast as having something of his own to recommend himself — do suppose that a proud, impenitent enemy to God and his law may see the truth, wisdom, and goodness of the gospel, and approve of the character of Christ, and the way of salvation by him; which supposition is as unreasonable and absurd, and as contrary to the Holy Scripture, as can be made or conceived. And it is indeed most dishonorable to Christ and the gospel; as if his character was such that a wicked man — an impenitent enemy of God — might discern the truth and excellency of it, and heartily approve and be pleased with it! How contrary is this to the declaration of Christ and his apostle! The former says, "He that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light;" and the latter, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." *

II. From this subject it appears that saving faith, by which the just do live, is a very different thing from what many have imagined and taught.

Saving faith consists in the discerning and belief of the truths of the gospel and cordial approbation of them, and conformity to them, which is peculiar to a renewed, wise, and understanding heart. It implies the whole of evangelical holiness, in the exercise of which men believe on Christ, receive him and cleave to him with purpose of heart, and walk in him, and by which he dwells in their hearts. It is the life of a Christian, and is essential to all his holiness, and cannot be distinguished from it; for it all consists in fighting the fight of faith, by which he lays hold of eternal life.

* The importance that this gross error, which is so unscriptural and absurd, and leads to so many hurtful conceptions of the law of faith, should be wholly discarded, has been the motive to attempt thus to expose and confute it. Though it has been embraced by many in the Protestant world, and there are those who at this day contend for it, yet it is hoped that an effectual stop will be put to the continuance and spread of it. If they who have imbibed it, and are disposed zealously to defend it, should not be convinced of their mistake, yet they who have not exploded it, but have been rather favorable towards it and the doctrines which imply it, through want of conviction of those truths by which it may be made to appear contrary to Scripture, and a dangerous error, may, by attending to what has here been said, be led to see their mistake, and renounce it, with proper concern and zeal to suppress it, and vindicate the opposite truth. And they who are coming on the stage, and have not yet formed any opinion on this point, may be prevented imbibing this error, so that it may die with those who now embrace it and cannot be convinced of their error, and not be handed down to posterity.

Therefore, the faith by which sinners are justified does not consist in mere speculation, or conviction and judgment and reason, considered as distinct from the heart and the exercises of that, or of the will and affections; which has been the opinion of many. It is presumed enough has been said fully to confute this notion.

Nor does saving faith consist in the sinner's believing and persuasion that he is justified, that Christ died for him, is his, so that he shall certainly be saved. This belief an impenitent enemy to Christ may entertain, and yet continue as impenitent and unholy as he was before. Besides, there is no foundation for such a persuasion or belief antecedent to the exercise of saving faith, by and in consequence of which a sinner is justified; but it is perfect delusion and falsehood. No such thing is revealed in the Bible, that a sinner is justified before he believes in Christ, cordially receives him, and is reconciled to God, but the contrary; that he is condemned, and under the wrath of God. Therefore, a belief that his sins are pardoned, and that God loves him, antecedent to his having an interest in Christ by cordially receiving him, is a delusion, and is a persuasion grounded entirely on a false suggestion, either from his own heart or the father of lies.

It has been said and published, in vindication of this sort of faith, that men must believe that they are justified, etc., that by their believing it may become true, according to their faith; and, therefore, they must believe without any evidence of the truth of it, either from Scripture, sense, or reason, that by their so believing it may become true; and, indeed, there is no other way to adhere to this notion of faith, but by embracing this mass of absurdity and nonsense.

Volumes have been written in this century by men in high repute for piety, in which this notion of faith runs through the whole; and they have been, and still are, read by multitudes with high approbation. Without calling in question the piety of the authors or their admirers, — many if not most of whom probably do not critically attend to their notion of faith, but to the good things which they have written, — there is sufficient warrant to say that this notion of faith is not only most contrary to the Scriptures, but as unintelligible, and attended with as many absurdities, as any religious tenet that was ever thought of and promulgated by Mahomet, the man of sin, or any one else.

This notion of faith is not only in itself unscriptural and most absurd, but, considered in the tendency of it and that with which it is connected, the dangerous and destructive consequence of it will appear. They who entertain this notion

of faith suppose that the impenitent enemy of God, upon believing that God loves him, that his sins are pardoned, etc., does begin to repent and love God, etc., because he is persuaded that God loves him and will save him; that by this belief, and under this persuasion, the sinner is converted, and becomes a true friend of God, and a real Christian. They say that a sinner cannot be brought to love God until he first sees or believes that God loves him, or is in some manner and degree become propitious to him; that a sight and real belief of this is effectual to induce him to love God and live a holy life. This makes his conversion and all his love and holiness to be nothing but selfishness and pride; and such a conversion does not imply any change of heart for the better, but for the worse; and all his supposed holiness is nothing but selfishness and sin, which the worst of men may practise, and continue real enemies to the true character of God. The Lord Jesus Christ has decided this in the most plain and express words: "If ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them."

The Christian, *after* he has believed and embraced the gospel, and is justified, may, on reflecting on his own state and exercises, have good evidence that he does love Christ, and is a true believer, and, therefore, that he is justified and shall be saved; this, consequently, he may believe, and in this way obtain the "assurance of hope." But this is not saving faith, or any part of it, for saving faith must take place *before* he is justified; and there must be ground of evidence that he has saving faith, *before* he can have any reason to believe that he is in a state of justification, and shall be saved.*

III. From the view we have had of the law of faith, we may see the reason why men are naturally opposed to the gospel and refuse to comply with it, viz., because holiness is necessarily implied in an approbation of it and cordially embracing it; therefore, faith is the gift of God. In order to believe on Christ, a man must be born again of the Spirit of God, have a new heart given to him, and be made a new creature, friendly to true holiness. This is, therefore, abundantly asserted in the Scriptures. It will be sufficient here to refer to the words of

* This subject is more largely and very particularly considered by Dr. Bellamy in his "Theron, Paulinus, and Aspasio; or, Letters and Dialogues upon the Nature of Love to God, Faith in Christ, and Assurance of Eternal Life," and in his "Essay on the Nature and Glory of the Gospel of Jesus Christ;" which books may be recommended to all who desire to be well acquainted with the subject, and form their judgment according to the truth.

This subject is also discussed by President Edwards, in his "Discourses on Justification by Faith alone," and by the author in his "System of Doctrines contained in Divine Revelation," vol. ii. chap. iv. sec. vi., "Concerning Saving Faith;" and sec. xi., "Concerning Believers' Assurance of Salvation."

the apostle John: "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God."

If the gospel were an institution which might be approved of, believed, and truly embraced by an unholy heart, an unregenerate man, it would not be a holy institution, and, therefore, could not be from God. Jesus Christ is a holy Savior; holiness is essential to every part of his character, to all his words and works. Salvation by him is a holy salvation, and the way of salvation is wise and holy in every view of it. It is, therefore, impossible that an unholy heart should come near to this Savior with the least inclination towards him and the way of salvation by him; but such a heart must hate him, and choose to keep at a distance from him and avoid him, and can be no more reconciled to him and the gospel than to the holy law of God.

How degrading and dishonorable to Christ and the gospel then, and how unreasonable and absurd is their notion, who hold that the gospel is suited to please and win the heart of an unregenerate man, so that, while he hates God's holy law, he with an unholy heart embraces the gospel, and in this way and by this means his heart is changed, and he becomes friendly to God and his holy law! When shall the professed friends of the gospel cease to dishonor and pervert it, in order to suit it to the taste and inclination of an unholy heart?

IV. We hence learn that all the interests of true virtue and holiness are as much and as well secured and promoted by the law of faith as they are or can be by the law of works.

Many have thought that the doctrine of justification by faith, through the atonement and merit of Christ, not being in the least recommended to this favor by any works or holiness of our own, is a licentious doctrine, and tends to influence men to neglect a holy life, and give themselves to sloth and sin. But this has been wholly owing to their ignorance of the subject.

According to the law of faith, true holiness is as necessary in order to justification as if the sinner were justified by the merit of his works, though in a different way, and for a different reason, as has been shown. Faith itself, by which the sinner receives Christ, and renounces all dependence on his own holiness to recommend him to the least favor, and relies on free, undeserved grace for the justification of one infinitely unworthy and ill deserving, — this faith itself is a holy exercise, as has been proved; and men cannot live by faith but by living a holy life.

As real holiness, in love to the character of God and his law, is exercised in approving of the character of Christ, and

coming to him and trusting in him for pardon, justification, and eternal life, as can be in obeying the law of God, as the price of the divine favor, according to the law of works. Holiness is as really and necessarily exercised in applying to God as an infinitely gracious and bountiful Benefactor, and gratefully receiving of him infinite favor and blessings as a free gift to the infinitely guilty and ill deserving, as is or can be exercised in obedience to his authority and law as a recommendation to, and enjoyment of, his favor and blessing.

And as obedience and holiness is as necessary according to the law of faith as it is according to the law of works, in order to justification and eternal life, so there is not merely as much, but much greater, encouragement to practise it; and the obligations and motives to the exercise of holiness, in love to God and man, are greatly increased, and rendered unspeakably greater and stronger. by the law of faith.

How wholly groundless and unreasonable, and contrary to truth, fact, and experience, is the objection to the law of faith, — according to which "a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law," or not by the law of works, — that this renders unnecessary, and is a discouragement to, holiness and good works, and encourages licentiousness and sin!

V. This subject opens an easy and plain way, and perhaps the only satisfactory and true way, to reconcile the two apostles, Paul and James, in what they say of that by which sinners are justified. St. Paul has said, "Therefore, we conclude that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law; knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ." St. James has said, "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." It has been rashly thought by some that the apostles in these words expressly contradict each other; but their perfect consistence and agreement with each other will appear only by observing the different sense in which they use the word *works*, which is evident by all they say on the point.

Paul expressly defines the works which he excludes from the law of faith and sets in opposition to it. They are *the works of the law*, — the same with the law of works, — meaning works done in order to recommend to favor, as a price offered to purchase and merit acceptance and justification of God, as has been represented and explained. By "works" James means Christian holiness and obedience, which is the same with the law of faith, which has been explained. By "works" James means that love, in all its operations and fruits, which he says is the life and soul of faith, and without which there cannot be any true faith. His words are, "For

as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also. Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?" How could he more strongly assert the holiness of saving faith, when he says that holy love, the root and essence of all Christian obedience and good works, is as much the life and active nature of a living, saving faith, as the spirit is the life and activity of the body? How contrary is this to saying, as many have done, that holy love, which implies and comprehends all the obedience and good works of a Christian, is the *effect* and consequence of faith, and produced by faith, as the cause produces the effect!

Paul agrees with James perfectly in his description of saving faith. He says, "Faith worketh by love;" that is, love, which is the essence of all Christian obedience, and implies all good works, is the soul and active life of faith, by which it operates, or acts and works, as the spirit is the life of the body, by which it moves and acts.

VI. This subject may be improved by those who have attended to it, as affording matter by which they may examine themselves, whether their conversion and consequent religion be true and genuine, or false and spurious.

Have you been effectually cured of a disposition to trust to your own righteousness, and renounced and become dead to the law of works, under a clear conviction that you were cursed by it, notwithstanding any thing you could do, and that you should be justly accursed forever unless you obtained relief by the law of faith, trusting in the merit and righteousness of Christ for pardon and justification?

And have you been led to understand and cordially to embrace the law of faith, in which you highly approved of the character of Christ and the way of salvation by him, condemning yourself as being so far from having or doing any thing to recommend you to God, or render you deserving, that you were infinitely guilty and ill deserving?

Have you felt and experienced this law of faith, suited to destroy your pride, and set you at the greatest distance from boasting? and the more you understood and cordially embraced this way of salvation, the more disposed you have been to humble yourself in the sight of the Lord?

Do you know that your heart was naturally as much opposed to the gospel as it was to the holy law of God, and that, had not God given you a new heart by regeneration, you should have continued an enemy to Christ? — that the law of faith is a holy law, and that it cannot be complied with by a heart unfriendly to God and holiness? — that the more you attend to, and are pleased with, the law of faith, the

greater is your aversion from sin, and the more you long to be holy, and hunger and thirst after righteousness?

Are you desiring and looking for that evidence that you are justified and shall be saved, which arises from a consciousness that you do embrace the gospel, and have those holy exercises which imply this, or are implied in conforming to the law of faith? and do you desire no other evidence but this that your justification may be proved only by good evidence that you are sanctified?

SERMON

ON THE

REASON OF THE CHRISTIAN'S HOPE,

WHICH HE OUGHT ALWAYS TO BE READY TO GIVE.

A SERMON.*

THE REASON OF THE CHRISTIAN'S HOPE, WHICH HE OUGHT ALWAYS TO BE READY TO GIVE.

And be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear. — 1 Pet. iii. 14, 15.

The apostle Peter had a special commission to preach the gospel to the Jews, which did not exclude a regard to the uncircumcised Gentiles. He, therefore, writes this epistle to the Jews who were dispersed from the land of Israel into various places in the Lesser Asia and had embraced Christianity, with whom the Gentiles are included, who had become Christians, and had joined with the believing Jews. In consequence of their becoming Christians, they were hated, and suffered persecution by the unbelieving Jews and idolatrous Gentiles, who were disposed to inflict on them all the evils which were in their power, especially the former, who exercised the same ill will towards them which Paul had acted out before his conversion, and which they manifested towards the apostles and all Christians, of which we have the history in the Acts of the Apostles.

The apostle, in this epistle to them, mentions many things to support and comfort them in their afflicted, suffering state, and encourage and animate them to persevere in the profession and practice of Christianity, to whatever reproaches, worldly losses, and persecutions they might expose themselves hereby; and gives them many directions for their conduct in all circumstances, and towards all persons, especially in the present state of things. Of the latter, we find an instance in the words now before us. The apostle here alludes to the words of Isaiah in the eighth chapter of his prophecy. When the inhabitants of Judah were threatened with an invasion by the neighboring nations, he tells them not to be afraid of them,

* Written in the year 1801, and preached in two sermons.

but to sanctify the Lord of hosts, and make him their fear and their dread. So the apostle tells Christians, when threatened with the greatest evils that the enemies to Christianity could inflict, not to be afraid of their terror, neither be troubled, but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts. To sanctify the Lord in their hearts was to love him supremely, and trust in him alone, desiring that he might be exalted and glorified above all creatures forever. The same word in the original is translated *hallow*, which is here rendered *sanctify*. "Hallowed be thy name;" that is, may thy sacred name and glorious character be made known, displayed, and glorified to the highest degree by all things that take place.

"And be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you the reason of the hope that is in you." Christians are directed to be *always* able, ready, and willing to give the reason of their hope to *every one* who asketh it of them. This must be understood with some limitation. By *every one* who asketh is meant every one who asketh in a proper, decent manner, and with an apparent, professed desire to know what reasons Christians can give for their hope. If any asked them to do this with an apparent design to ridicule and mock them, and to get some advantage, and matter of accusation against them which would expose them to suffering, they were not obliged to answer such, as it would be contrary to the command of Christ: "Give not that which is holy to dogs; neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you."

"With meekness and fear." Christians are not to be haughty and insolent in giving the reason of their hope, nor enter into ostentatious and angry disputes with unbelievers. They must not despise and treat them with contempt for their unreasonable disbelief, but pity them, and treat them with condescension, tenderness, and benevolence, not showing or having any angry resentment for any injurious treatment they may have received from them, but suffering and bearing all injuries with a meek and quiet spirit and behavior. All this is implied in meekness. Fear is here put for Christian humility, in opposition to high mindedness and self-confidence, boasting of their privileges and character, by which they are favored and distinguished from those who are in a state of darkness and unbelief. It implies a sense of their own exceeding unworthiness, and utter insufficiency in themselves to defend and maintain the honor of the Christian cause, without constant support and assistance from divine grace, and continual liableness to fail of their duty, and dishonor Christ, by not speaking and behaving as becomes their Christian calling and profession.

This fear is essential to the Christian character, and becomes Christians at all times. The apostle Paul exhorts Christians "not to be high minded, but fear;" to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling; and tells the Christians at Corinth that he was among them in fear and much trembling.

The subject proposed to be considered, in a further improvement of the words before us, is the hope of Christians, and the reason they have to give, and ought always to be ready to give, for this their hope, when properly required of them.

I. It is to be considered what is included in the hope of Christians.

This hope, indeed, implies and comprehends more than words can express, or the most enlarged mind on earth can conceive. The greatest Christians do in this state comprehend and know but a small part of what is contained in this hope. And they depend on the enlightening influences of the spirit of Christ for the increasing knowledge of this, which they may and ought to obtain in this life. Therefore, the apostle Paul prays for the Christians at Ephesus, "that God would give unto them the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; the eyes of their understanding being enlightened, that they might know what was the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." Christians may be assisted in their meditations on this pleasing and important subject by attending to the following brief and scanty representation of their hope, taken from the Holy Scriptures.

Jesus Christ is the Christian's hope. What is contained in his person and character; in what he has done and suffered; in the manifestations he has made of the divine perfections; in his revealed designs and promises to his church and to every believer, — is all the Christian can hope for, or can desire, and far, infinitely far, exceeds his highest expectations, and the utmost stretch of his conception and imagination. Jesus Christ has an infinite fulness for sinners. He has all they want, and they cannot conceive or wish for any greater or other good. And he gives himself, and all he has, his infinite fulness, to every believer.

Christians hope by Christ to obtain the free pardon of all their sins, however many and great they are, and to be delivered from the curse of the law of God, even eternal destruction and misery, and from all evil. As the children of God, they hope for his kind protection to defend them from all real evil while in this world; that what is in itself evil shall be made to them a real good, so that all things shall conspire to

promote their greatest good. They hope, in the best way and manner, and the most proper time, to be delivered from all sin and moral depravity, and made perfectly holy, by Christ their Savior; and that their salvation shall be for the glory of God and the Redeemer forever, otherwise it would be no salvation to them. They trust in the wisdom and goodness of Christ to order the time and manner of their death so as shall be most for his glory and their good. They hope that when they drop their bodies into the grave they shall immediately enter into a world of light and complete happiness, being wholly transformed into the moral likeness of Christ, and in the enjoyment of him, and of his favor and love, and beholding his glory; and, in the happy society of the redeemed, shall enjoy uninterrupted, increasing felicity without end.

The Christian's hope includes in it an assured and pleasing prospect that Christ will destroy the works and kingdom of the devil on earth, and set up his own kingdom, and give his people the possession of the world for at least a thousand years; which happy time for the meek, the saints, to possess the earth, and delight in the abundance of peace and happiness, shall commence and continue in a time and manner most agreeable to Infinite Wisdom and Goodness; and the Christian expects the set time will come, and is hastening on, when Christ will come to judgment, raise the dead, and assemble all the children of Adam before him, when he will sentence the impenitent wicked to everlasting punishment, and invite and bring his friends into the possession of his eternal kingdom, to enjoy perfect and progressing happiness forever; and that they shall see, and have a most pleasing and eternally increasing conviction, when all the enemies of Christ are put under his feet, and all things are adjusted and brought to their proper and designed issue, that all events which have taken place, even all the evil, sin, and misery which has been and will exist forever, are included in the divine purpose and plan, which was in the highest wisdom and goodness fixed and ordained from eternity, and are necessary, in the most proper and desirable manner and to the highest possible degree, to promote the glory of God in the most clear manifestation and brightest display of the divine perfections, and produce the highest happiness and glory of the eternal kingdom of God. This will be contemplated forever, and will be a source of growing entertainment, and part of the happiness which is included in the Christian's hope. The work of redemption by Christ is so grand, wonderful, and complicated, the effect of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, exercised in the most astonishing condescension, grace and mercy, truth and faith-

fulness, to infinitely guilty, lost, and miserable sinners, in a way honorable to a holy, righteous God, his law and government, and suited to humble and save sinful rebels, and raise them to the highest honor and happiness; and is attended with such infinitely great, important, glorious, eternal consequences, that the redeemed must enjoy unspeakably great and increasing happiness in searching into the wonders of this work, and loving, praising, and adoring God and the Redeemer forever.

Every true Christian hopes to enjoy all this, and more, which no tongue can utter or heart conceive, and he shall actually possess it forever. He will stand at the right hand of Christ at the day of judgment, and enter with all the redeemed into eternal life and happiness, and enjoy the company and friendship of a most lovely and happy society, all sweetly united in love to Christ and to each other, under the best advantages to enjoy God, in the assurance of his favor and love, and to be happy in friendship with each other, and make rapid advances in knowledge, holiness, and happiness forever. But the theme is endless, and it is time to stop. This is the hope of a Christian.

II. The *reason* which Christians have to give for this hope which is in them, or entertained by them, is to be considered.

This involves two particulars, which are in themselves really distinct, though implied in each other; and, therefore, it is proper to consider them separately. They are these: The reason they have to believe and be sure that the Christian Scriptures, the foundation of all their hopes, are a revelation from God, containing infallible truth, without any error in matters of faith and practice, and, therefore, to be relied upon with the greatest confidence and safety; and the reason of their hope that they are real Christians, and interested in all the blessings promised in the gospel to true believers in Christ.

First. The Christian, in giving the reason of his hope, must tell what evidence he has that Christianity is a divine institution, and that the Scriptures which contain a revelation of it were written by the inspiration of God.

Here Christians are introduced to speak for themselves, and give the reason of placing their hope in Christ and the gospel. They have the following answer to give to those who ask them: —

1. We feel the want of a hope of some good and happiness which cannot be obtained and enjoyed in this life and in this world. We find ourselves possessed of those mental capacities and desires which cannot be filled and satisfied with the enjoy-

ment of any or all the things of this world, the objects of time and sense. We know we have a capacity of enjoying a higher and better good than this world affords, and a good which is unfading, and will last to be enjoyed without any end; and we feel strong desires, which we cannot suppress, of existing forever, in the enjoyment of objects which will render us completely happy. This has excited us diligently to search and inquire whether, and where, any ground and good reason can be found for a hope of enjoying the good and happiness which is answerable to our capacity and desires.

2. If the Bible be excluded, upon the most diligent and extensive search we have been able to make, no sufficient reason has been found, or can be given, for a hope of a good adequate to the capacity and desires of man. The heathen who have not enjoyed the Bible, even the wisest among them, have not discovered any certainty of a future state; and all their conjectures about it, and ideas of happiness to be enjoyed after death, if there be a future state, are so vague, uncertain, and absurd, that they can give no satisfaction to a rational mind, but tend to the contrary. They have obtained no true notions of the character of the true God; so far from it, that they represent their gods in a ridiculous and shameful light, and as practising horrible vices. None of them, even their greatest philosophers, have been able to find out what true happiness is. They are indeed, and always have been, without the true God, and without a reasonable hope in the world.

And this is true of the Mahometans. They profess, indeed, to believe in one God, which Mahomet taught them with a number of other things, who learnt them from the Bible, with which he was in some measure acquainted; but they have no correct, consistent notions of the divine character, especially of his moral character. They do not know of any reasonable way for sinners to obtain pardon of their sins and the favor of God; and, consequently, cannot have any reasonable hope of this. The most ignorant and vicious men among them have a promise of their prophet that they shall go directly to heaven, if they die fighting for his cause and their religion, or if they perform certain prescribed actions and ceremonies; and the heaven they hope for they think consists, not in holiness and in the enjoyment of the true God, and the mental happiness implied in this, but in those sensual delights and gratifications more suited for beasts than men; which are the objects of aversion and abhorrence, and not of hope, to a good and pure mind.

The infidels, deists, and atheists who live in that part of the world called Christian are really without hope. The latter

are professedly so; they have no belief of a future state, and have no hope of any good which they cannot enjoy in this life, which to every discerning mind is nothing but vanity and vexation of spirit. These choose to view and place themselves in such a low state of existence that they have no preëminence above the beasts, except that they are capable of suffering more pain and misery than the brute creation.

As to the Deists, they profess to believe there is a God; but do not appear to worship him, or derive any enjoyment from their belief. Many of them, with atheists, do not believe there is any future state, but say they expect to die as the beasts, and have no further existence. Others of them consider it as a matter of uncertainty whether they shall exist in a future state or not; and they who profess to believe they shall exist after death can give no satisfactory account of the happiness they shall enjoy, nor any reason of their hope of happiness in the forgiveness of their sins and the favor of God, whom they have offended. For reason, on which they depend, affords no evidence that God will forgive them; but rather that they must fall under his displeasure, and be miserable forever. They can have no hope from the god they profess to believe exists. Having renounced the God revealed in the Bible, they are wholly at a loss about the character of their god. Some of them ascribe no moral character to him, and they who do cannot agree in what it is; and none of them can tell whether, or how far, men have any concern in it, so as to have any influence on their conduct or happiness. So that they are all without any reasonable hope, having renounced the true God.

Therefore, if the Christian hope be not founded upon reason and truth, but must be given up as fabulous and mere delusion, we are left without hope, and we must sink into the most gloomy darkness and despair. But, —

3. We find in the Bible an exhibition of that good which is suited to make us completely and forever happy, containing all that we can desire or hope for. It reveals a most agreeable and wise way for the pardon of sinners, and their reconciliation with God, and to enjoy his favor as much, and to a higher degree, and be much more happy than if they had never sinned. It contains repeated and abundant promises of deliverance from all evil, and the everlasting enjoyment of the best and highest good of which we are or ever shall be capable. All this is offered and bestowed as a free gift on every one who is willing to receive it and asketh for it. We will not enter into more particulars here in description of this hope. They have been represented in the former part of this

discourse, and will, of course, come into view under the next head. We will only observe here, that the infinite good comprehended in the redemption of sinners, which is the subject of the revelation in the Bible, is the only proper and complete object of hope that can be conceived of or imagined by a reasonable and good mind, if it be true, and there is evidence that it is indeed a revelation which is given to men from God. Which leads us to say, —

4. There is clear, most satisfactory and abundant evidence, fully answerable to the nature and importance of the subject, that the Bible is true, and contains a revelation from God.

But before we enter upon the short and summary detail of this evidence which we propose to give, the following things will be mentioned: —

Though the evidence of the truth of divine revelation is sufficient to convince the understanding and judgment of those who will seriously attend to the subject, though they have bad hearts, and do not really love the truths it contains, yet they cannot have that satisfactory assurance that it is from God, and indeed a divine revelation, which those of upright and good hearts have, though their understandings and mental powers be not so bright and strong as those of others whose hearts are not good.

It may also be observed, that truths and objects of a moral and spiritual nature may be the objects of as great certainty, yea, greater, than those objects and things whose existence is known only by our bodily senses; so that a man of an honest and good heart, and right taste and discerning, would doubt of the truth of the latter rather than of the former, if one must be doubted of and given up as not true.

We would further observe here, that if it were possible that the Christian hope is a mere delusion, which we *know* is not true, and is impossible, yet we should lose nothing by entertaining it. We shall, in the issue, be as well off as those who have no hope. If we should cease to exist at death, or in whatever state we should be, we should not be in a worse state than others, or than we should be had we not been Christians. We have a high enjoyment in our hope now, which will continue as long as we are in this world. It is constantly better to us than all worldly enjoyments, and we should be great losers by exchanging it with the most happy worldly man for all his enjoyments. Our hope is a constant source of high enjoyment, which unspeakably more than counterbalances all the uneasiness and sufferings which are occasioned by it, be they ever so many and great. Therefore,

unbelievers, if they knew we were deluded, — which they do not know, and never will, — would act an unreasonable, injurious, and cruel part, to take our hope from us, if they could, or even to attempt it; for if this could be effected, it would deprive us of more happiness than they ever did or can enjoy, which is better to us than all this world, and we should sink down into the most gloomy state of despair and misery, which they who never had the Christian hope cannot feel or suffer while in this world.*

We now return to the point proposed, to speak of the reason we have of our hope, grounded on the evidence that the gospel is from Heaven, which amounts to as great demonstrative certainty as there is or can be of any proposition which was ever proposed or thought of. We have read the Bible over and over again, and with much more care and attention than we bestowed on any other book. And the more we have read it, and attended to and understood the truths contained in it, the more clear and certain has the evidence appeared of its divine original, and the greater pleasure we have had in the things which it reveals.

When we enter on this theme, it is not easy to determine where to begin, or where to end. There is so great a multiplicity of evidence that the Scriptures contain a revelation from God, and the number of particulars from which this is proved is so great, that it would take more time than we now have to mention all of them. We can only give a summary view of this evidence now, which we are sure is a sufficient reason of our hope, of which we shall never be ashamed.

It is common and proper to distinguish the evidence that the Bible has a divine original into that which is called *external* and that which is *internal*, consisting in the doctrines, truths, and duties which are revealed and inculcated therein.

* "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." (1 Cor. xv. 19.) These words have been understood by some in a sense which may be thought inconsistent with the sentiments expressed in the above paragraph. But, on a careful examination, they will doubtless appear in perfect unison. To hope in Christ only in this life is really to give up the Christian hope and Christianity itself, as a groundless fable; and consequently to be deprived of all the enjoyment and happiness derived from Christianity and the Christian hope, by which they have an unspeakably higher enjoyment, and greater degree of happiness, than unbelievers can have. And as they feel the vanity of all things in this world, their loss is irreparable, and they must feel themselves wretched, and sink into gloom, despair, and misery; while the men of the world, by their ignorance, delusion, and a worldly mind, knowing no greater good than they have or hope to obtain in the enjoyments of this life, are eagerly pursuing and fondly hoping for worldly good; by which they are, at present, prevented from falling into that despair and misery which will certainly come upon them, when this life shall end.

We shall endeavor to consider these separately, though they will naturally, and perhaps to the best advantage, be in some instances, in a degree, blended together. · Certainly the honest mind will view them together, and at once, as strengthening each other, and amounting to a clear demonstration of this truth.

The external evidence consists in the manner in which the Christian Scriptures have been made and given to the world; the men and their character who wrote them, and the manner of their writing; the miracles which have been wrought in confirmation of the truth of the facts related, and the doctrines and commands made known, and that they who spoke and wrote were inspired by God to speak and do what they did; the numerous predictions of things and events which should come to pass, many of which were accomplished soon, others have come to pass long since they were predicted, and many are fulfilling now before our eyes, in the revolutions which are taking place, and the present state of the nations and of the world; the spread of Christianity among the nations by the men who were the principal instruments of propagating it, and the preservation and continuance of it in the world to this day, notwithstanding the great and constant opposition to it which has been made.

These are the chief, but not all the external evidences of the divine original of the Bible, which must be more particularly considered. The men by whom it was written appear to be men of good natural abilities, sensible, honest, and serious, as men really inspired by God to write would be. They were not a number of men who lived at the same time, and could consult together, and lay a scheme what to write; but lived in different ages, the last above a thousand years after the first who wrote. They do not appear selfish, proud, and vain, to seek their own worldly honor or interest, but the contrary. The manner of their writing is inimitable, and differs from the writings of all other men. This has been observed and illustrated by many authors, and is needless for us to repeat. They write an orderly history of the world, from the beginning of it to the time of those last events which relate to the subjects on which they wrote. And this history is carried on by them to the end of the world by their predictions. This is the most ancient, well-authenticated, consistent, important, and useful history that was ever formed by uninspired men, or ever will or can be. It exhibits one grand scheme and plan of events, all uniting and conspiring to bring all things to the most happy issue, worthy of the infinite Being who is infinitely powerful, wise, and good. It is as

really impossible that any uninspired man or number of men, especially who lived in such distant ages of the world, should make the writings which we find in the Bible, as it is for them to contrive and make the visible world; and we have as satisfying evidence that the Scriptures contained in the Bible were written by the inspiration of God, as we have that the sun, moon, and stars, and all the visible world were made by him, especially if we take into view the facts which we are now going to mention.

Moses, who was the first writer, gave abundant proof that what he wrote, said, and did, was by the inspiration, command, and direction of the true God, by the numerous miracles which he wrought, and the predictions he made, which were fulfilled directly, or in the time of his life, and have been since fulfilled. And here we would observe, that prophecy, when it is fulfilled, is a real miracle, as absolute, independent prescience is an incommunicable attribute of God; and when a man has ability to know and foretell events that are future, this is as much above what are called the laws of nature as the ability to work any miracle whatever, and is an evidence of divine inspiration. Therefore, miracles and prophecy which come to pass may be considered together, as they are frequently united in the same event in the Scriptures. Thus most of the miracles wrought by Moses in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness, during forty years, were accompanied by predictions of the miraculous event before it took place, though the latter was instantaneous with the former, and both were of the nature of a miracle, and so were all the prophecies of Moses which have since been fulfilled, by which, and by all the miracles done by him, his divine mission was fully confirmed, in the view of the whole nation of Israel; and this has been handed down through all ages since in the church, and been increasing by the fulfilment of many of his prophecies, and the discovery of the import and design of the institutions which he appointed, which he declared he received from Heaven. And, indeed, all or most of the ordinances instituted by Moses contained predictions, pointing out the character of the Savior who was to come into the world, and what was to be done and suffered by him for the redemption of man, which were exactly fulfilled in him, together with all the predictions of him by the prophets who arose after Moses. All the Mosaic institutions, and all the miracles he did and predictions he uttered, all the miracles and prophecies by the prophets after Moses, with all the events which took place, were designed and suited to prepare the way for that event — the incarnation of the Son of God; so that the divine design

and wisdom is to be seen, by those who will properly attend, superintending through the whole. It is impossible it should be a mere human contrivance.

At the very time which was pointed out and fixed by the prophets hundreds of years before, — when there was, consequently, a general expectation of the appearance of the promised Savior, and the state of the Jews and of the world was made ready for such an event, — the expected Messiah came, in a character and in just such circumstances as were described and foretold long before by the prophets. He wrought many miracles, by which he proved that he was the Son of God, the very person predicted by the prophets, and taught the most important truth in a manner which was never done by any mere man. He was a perfect example of humility, meekness, uprightness, benevolence, wisdom, and piety, and taught, both by precept and example, the nature and properties of true religion, and the only excellent and perfect morality. But now we have insensibly run into what properly belongs to the next head — of internal evidence.

He instructed his disciples into the meaning of those prophecies which related to him; and from this and acquaintance with him, his doctrines and precepts, and the miracles he wrought, they believed with all their heart that he was the Son of God who was to come into the world. The body of the nation of Jews, especially their teachers and leaders, — the scribes and Pharisees, — were so sunk into depravity and ignorance, their hearts were so bad and vicious, that they did not understand the prophecies concerning him; nor could they approve of his person, character, and doctrines, all which condemned them; but they hated them with a hatred which could not be satisfied till they had put him to a cruel and ignominious death, which he had repeatedly foretold, and the consequent destruction of that nation, to his disciples, and the ancient prophets had predicted. He also said that he should rise from death on the third day. But his enemies had no expectation or belief of this, but were disposed to reject all the evidence that could be given of such a fact. And even his disciples and friends did not understand the prophets nor the words of Christ on this point, and knew not what to think of his being put to death as he was; and were wholly in the dark as to the consequence, till the evidence that he was risen from the dead was irresistibly forced upon them.

When he had given incontestable evidence of his resurrection to a sufficient number of chosen, competent witnesses, who could not be deceived, and conversed with them a considerable time, and given them proper instructions, they de-

clared that they saw him ascend towards heaven in a cloud till out of their sight; and that two angels appeared to them, who told them he was gone to heaven, and would return again at the day of judgment. They retired, and waited till, as he had promised them, they received from Heaven miraculous power to bear witness of his resurrection, and proclaim salvation to sinners upon believing in his name. They were soon endued with power, and enabled to work miracles to prove the truth of their testimony that Christ was risen from the dead and gone to heaven, and had commanded them to preach the gospel to the world, and that in this they said nothing but what was contained in the writings of Moses and the prophets. They went forth, and, contrary to all human probability and expectation of the success of such a small number of poor, low, illiterate men, with such a message, so contrary to the strong prejudices and prevailing customs both of Jews and Gentiles, and to the lusts and evil propensities which naturally reign in the hearts of all men, they made numerous converts to Christianity from among the Jews and the idolatrous heathen.

It is impossible that these facts should take place, unless Christianity were from Heaven, and the apostles were assured that what they related concerning Christ was true. That, in their then circumstances, they should undertake to propagate Christianity, without any worldly motives, and in the prospect of poverty, disgrace, and suffering, which they knew was as contrary to the natural inclinations of men as any thing can be, cannot be accounted for, unless on the supposition they knew that what they declared was true, and most important to themselves and others, and that they could depend upon the promise of Christ to support and succeed them; and it appears to us that their success in propagating Christianity, and being supported in the midst of opposition and suffering till they had collected a number of churches, is a demonstration that divine power upheld them, and changed the hearts of men so as to dispose them to attend and receive the gospel. This was as far above all mere human contrivance and efforts as is the production of the natural world, and cannot be accounted for without supposing that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that the apostles were enabled to do those great and wonderful things by his assisting power, agreeably to the relation given of this matter in the Bible.

And that the gospel has spread among the nations, and Christianity has been continued to this day, notwithstanding the constant and strong opposition which has been made to it in so many ways, is, as we may say, a constant miracle, and a

clear evidence that it has a divine original, and is a demonstration that it is of God, according to the test proposed by the good sense of the learned Gamaliel. If this counsel or this work had been of men, it would have come to nought long ago; but since it has continued to this day, and men, with all the cunning and power with which they have in all ages attempted it, have not been able to overthrow it, its divine original is demonstrated, and it must be of God; and we are certain that all they who do oppose Christianity, and attempt to overthrow it, are fighting against God, and will be disappointed and confounded.

We will finish this head by mentioning the state in which the Jews now are, and have been, since the destruction of Jerusalem and their temple, and the present state of the world, which are agreeable to the predictions in the Bible. The state into which the Jews have fallen in consequence of the crucifixion of Christ by that nation, who wished that the guilt of his blood might fall on them and their posterity, is agreeable to the prophecies of Moses and the other prophets; to the predictions of Christ and the apostles; and are, in this view, a standing evidence of the truth of Christianity, which might be illustrated by a number of particulars, had we time to mention them. Their continuing a distinct people in their dispersion among the nations of the earth for so many ages, which is a sort of public, continual miracle, holds them in a situation in which they are prepared for the visible accomplishment of those many predictions and promises which we find in the Bible, of mercy in store for them, by their being made willing to submit to Christ, and come into his fold, the Christian church, with the Gentiles; which is a confirming evidence of the truth of the gospel, and that this happy event will take place; and that the time is not far distant, appears from other prophecies and the present state of the world.

This leads us to observe, that the state of the Christian church from the days of the apostles to this time, and to the end of the world, and the state, changes, and revolutions of the nations of the world, especially so far as they have any relation to the church, are foretold in the prophetic part of Scripture, particularly by the prophet Daniel, and in the revelation given to the apostle John, which have been exactly fulfilled, so far as they relate to the past and present time; and we may hence rely upon the accomplishment of the predictions of the events which are yet to take place. The great apostasy which has taken place in the church of Christ by antichrist, or the pope, by which the church of Rome is become a corrupt, false church, was particularly foretold, with many particular circumstances

relating to its character, and treatment of true Christians, etc., the rise of it, and the time of its continuance and final overthrow. Many things predicted of this false church have already come to pass, which are publicly known, and needless for us now to mention. It is evident that this false church, which in Scripture is called a harlot, with those who support her, and all her appendages, are on the decline, and hastening to the destruction predicted. Five vials of the wrath of God, predicted in the sixteenth chapter of the prophecy by John, have already been poured out on her; and the sixth vial is now running, under which antichrist is to sink, and the way be prepared for his final overthrow, which is now taking place in sight of the world. While this is doing, according to the prophecy, the spirits of devils are to be let loose in the Christian world as they never were before; and under their influence all orders of men are to become exceeding corrupt and wicked, more generally, and to a greater degree, than ever before, and own themselves in opposition to God and the Redeemer. And do we not see this representation fast fulfilling from year to year? Is it not known that infidelity, deism, atheism, and all kinds of gross error, and of vice and wickedness, which are the genuine fruits of these, are rapidly spreading, and prevail every where? Surely all must be sensible of this who can discern the signs of the times. Let who will shut their eyes, and live in ignorance, it appears to us a striking evidence that the events of this time are a fulfilment of the above-mentioned prophecy, and that, after the accomplishment of the events predicted under the seventh vial, the millennium, or prosperous and happy state of the church on earth, so much the subject of prophecy, both in the Old Testament and the New, will commence.

Having, as briefly as we could, stated the leading things in which the *external* evidence that the Bible contains a revelation from Heaven consists, we proceed to mention what we call the *internal* evidence of the same truth. This, we think, is more than answerable to the fair and promising outside, if we may so call it, which we have been considering, and is suited to establish every honest and good heart in assurance that the gospel is of God.

The Bible reveals the being, perfections, works, and designs of God, and sets them in a more grand, important, rational, and desirable light than ever has or could be discovered by uninspired men, or has been conceived by any man who is not acquainted with the Bible. God is here represented as without beginning to exist, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, infinitely and unchangeably wise and good, just, true, and

faithful; as the Creator of all things, and constantly upholding, directing, and governing them in all their revolutions and motions; all which are included in a most wise plan of operation, which has been fixed by him from eternity, is endless, absolutely perfect, and immutable; that he exercises a most perfect and wise *moral* government over all his rational creatures, to whom he gives a natural capacity of moral action and obedience to all his laws, which are perfect, just, and good. The law of God respects and requires a perfectly right disposition and exercises towards him and all fellow-creatures; to love him with all the heart, and our neighbor as ourselves. It assures favor and happiness to the perfectly obedient, and curses the disobedient with a curse which implies endless destruction. In short, the Bible reveals such a God as must be most pleasing and desirable to every perfectly innocent and good mind. Such have all they can desire or wish for in such a God, such a law and moral government; therefore, to them he is the only true God, and their chosen portion and happiness; while they know that all the notions that have been entertained of the divine character and his law by those who have not taken them from the Bible, and are not consistent with it, are erroneous, foolish, and wicked.

The Bible gives a particular and rational account of the creation of this visible world, which is nowhere else to be found; and of the creation of man, by making one man and one woman, from whom all mankind descended. It relates the sin and apostasy of these first-created parents of the human race, and how by this total moral depravity and sinfulness came upon all their children, by which they are all, in their natural state, under the curse of the law of God. That all men are by nature depraved and sinful, is a fact evident to all who attend to the matter; but how and in what way they are become so, none have been able to give any good reason who have not been acquainted with the Bible, or have rejected the account *that* gives of it, which appears rational, consistent, and satisfactory to those who have an upright and good heart, and even to the sober reason of *all* who examine it without a great degree of prejudice and pride.

But the Bible reveals that which is infinitely more important to us and to mankind, which never could have been known or thought of by any creature, had not God revealed it. This is the great design and work of the redemption of man by Jesus Christ, the Son of God, which is the great subject of revelation, as the whole has reference to this, and would be needless in any other view. This fixes a divine stamp on the whole, as it makes a more clear, full, and wonderful manifes-

tation and display of the divine perfections — power, wisdom, holiness, goodness, justice, truth, grace, and mercy — than otherwise could have been done; which cannot be known by those who never heard of this revelation, or who reject it as not coming from God.

In the gospel all mankind are represented as sinners — transgressors of the law of God, and under the curse of it; and a way is opened by which sinners may be delivered from this curse, and be recovered to holiness, the favor of God, and eternal life, consistent with maintaining and honoring the law of God, and displaying his justice and truth, his hatred of sin, and disposition to punish it. This has been effected by the incarnation of the Son of God, — who is really God manifest in the flesh, — who, by his suffering unto death in the flesh, and paying perfect obedience to the law for man, and in his stead, has so honored the law, both the precepts and penalty of it, that God may be just, according to the true spirit and design of it, and pardon and justify sinners who approve of the character and works of the Mediator and trust in him. This is the sum of the matter, which might be enlarged upon, and illustrated without end. But we shall only say now that to us the wisdom and all the perfections of God are displayed in the gospel — that this is the true God and eternal life, and that with good reason, and with the most perfect safety, we may place our highest hopes on this sure foundation.

The disciples of Jesus appear to give a fair and honest history of what he said and did, and of the treatment he received. They neither give him, or themselves, any praise, encomiums, or flattering titles; they only relate facts respecting him, themselves, and his friends and enemies, without making any reflections in his or their own favor, or against his enemies. They relate their own faults, without offering any palliation or excuse. No uninspired writer ever did, or could, or ever will, write a history of any particular person, or of so many important and extraordinary events, in which he is as much interested, as those who wrote the historical part of the New Testament were in the facts which they relate, in the manner in which they have written. Christ uniformly spake and acted with a dignity, condescension, seriousness, wisdom, and prudence which became a person of the character which he sustained, and the work he came into the world to perform. He never erred or made the least mistake in all he said and did.

Christ taught the most sublime, important, and pure doctrines respecting God and the state of man — the way of his recovery to the favor of God, to holiness and true happiness, and in what these consist. He taught that God was sover-

eign and independent in bestowing his mercy on men — that he had mercy on whom he pleased, for which men depend wholly on him; that all men were so wholly depraved and wicked at heart that they refused to come to the light when set before them; that they hated the light — yea, that they hated him and God his Father, and continued to do so till they were born again of the Spirit of God, by which a new, obedient heart was given; that, previous to this, they did not understand or see the things of the Spirit and kingdom of God: therefore, all who come to the knowledge of the truth, and embrace the gospel, are taught of God; in which he has mercy on whom he will have mercy, making the distinction according to the dictates of his wisdom and goodness — what will be best to promote the highest good of the universe, which cannot be done by the salvation of all. This is clearly and concisely expressed by Christ: "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." This recommends the gospel to us as true and from Heaven — as consistent and most excellent; (as no man or set of men, uninspired, would have represented mankind in so bad a light, and so dependent on God for a new and better heart;) or that every thing and circumstance relating to the salvation of men is under the direction of Infinite Wisdom and Goodness; all which is clearly taught in the Bible.

This leads us to say that the gospel appears to us evidently of divine original; and we are sure that it is not of man, because it represents man as so infinitely guilty, odious, and ill deserving, that he cannot recommend himself to the least favor by any thing he can do or suffer; and that it is unbecoming the holy and just God to pardon and save him out of respect to any thing good and deserving in him, but purely on the account of the atonement, righteousness, and infinite worthiness of a Mediator, to whom the unworthy sinner is united by faith: so that the salvation of men, from the foundation to the top-stone, from beginning to the end, is of mere sovereign, wonderful mercy and grace, by which man is thoroughly abased and humbled; and his salvation must be ascribed, not in the least to himself, but wholly to the undeserved, sovereign grace of God. This is perfectly agreeable to the law of God, and the sinful, guilty state of man; and there is no other possible way in which he could be saved, consistent with the divine law and the guilty state of man. It is impossible that this should be the contrivance of man, as it is directly contrary to his thoughts and reigning disposition, and is the principal reason of the opposition men make to the gospel, and why

none will cordially embrace it till they have a new heart, a heart to confess their sins, and humble themselves in the sight of God, and receive offered mercy as a free, undeserved gift to the infinitely guilty and wretched, and with pleasure ascribe all the honor and glory of their salvation to God alone; by which they are prepared to enjoy true happiness, of which they were before wholly ignorant and destitute.

We have another all-convincing evidence that the gospel is true, and has a divine original, from the duties and the nature of the religion taught and enjoined by Christ and his apostles, which are different from any thing of this kind recommended by men not inspired, and in many respects contrary thereto. The Bible teaches that all true religion has its beginning in the heart of man, in the fear of God, and consists in supreme love to him, and unreserved devotedness to his honor and interest in all our exercises and conduct, which implies constant devotion in prayer and praise, and a religious acknowledgment of him at all times, and in the proper seasons of public and social worship, as well as that which is more private and secret. Christ said, men must deny themselves, and forsake all they had, for his sake, in order to be his true disciples; that they must be humble, meek, upright, and benevolent, even towards their worst enemies; do them all the good in their power, and pray for them; forgive those who injured them, and indulge no disposition to retaliate and avenge themselves, but be harmless, and injure no man. In sum, the religion and morality taught in the Bible, especially by Christ and his apostles, is as much superior in its reasonableness and excellence to any thing of the kind which has been taught by men who have not derived their sentiments from revelation, as light is to darkness, and is perfectly suited to make those who heartily embrace it and conform to it happy in this world and forever. And we must further observe, that the religion and morality inculcated in the Bible is urged by the strongest motives, not only as most reasonable, and tending to render society happy in this world, but as it is enjoined by divine authority, with the promise of eternal happiness to all who obey, and an awful threatening of endless punishment to all others; in which opposite states all shall be fixed at the great day of general judgment.

We have now, in a summary way, given the reasons of our belief and assurance that the Bible contains a divine revelation, and of our hope in Christ. We see enough in him to satisfy us, even all we can wish, or hope for, or desire; enough to make us happy, beyond our present conception, in his eternal kingdom; and not us only, but all that shall believe on

him, which we would earnestly urge on all those to whom we have access; knowing that all who believe shall be saved, and all who do not believe on him shall be damned.

We are sensible that Christianity has been greatly opposed in all ages since its institution, and much has been written, and many objections have been made, against it, by men of great parts and learning, which have been fully and abundantly refuted by Christian writers, some of whose writings we have seen. We know also that infidelity has greatly increased of late, and is now increasing; and that many, who profess to believe Christianity to be true, are rejecting the most essential doctrines of it, and there are many others who do not cordially embrace it, or live answerable to the precepts of it. But this is so far from making us hesitate, or abating our belief and confidence of the truth of it, that we consider it as a confirmation that it is from God. For if mankind be so corrupt and wicked as to be enemies to the true God, which the Bible asserts, and is proved by their general conduct, then they must dislike and be enemies to all the manifestations of his character, and whatever he requires as most agreeable to him. Besides, the Bible relates many instances of this opposition to the truth, and predicts that the gospel would be opposed and rejected by men. Christ says to his disciples, "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves, and ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake." And the Bible says, "The time will come, when men will not endure sound doctrine; and shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." And it has been observed, that the present infidelity and wickedness which prevail in Christendom is particularly predicted in the Bible. Notwithstanding all this, we know the truth of the gospel is great, and will overcome; and that the gates of hell shall not pevail against it.

Finally: we know that the Bible could not be invented and forged by dishonest, wicked men; for this is, for many reasons, not only improbable, but impossible. And we know that no honest, good men would have any hand in it, if it were a forgery. It follows that the very existence of it, in the form in which it is, is a demonstration that it came from God, and was written by divine inspiration. We have as great and full evidence of this, yea, greater, than we have of the existence of the visible world, or of any thing which we perceive by our bodily senses.*

* The above evidences of the truth and divine origin of Christianity it is supposed every Christian is, or ought to be, able to produce on all proper occasions. Others are omitted, together with answers to the objections which are

Second. Christians, in giving the reason of the hope that is in them, must give the reason, not only of their belief and assurance that the gospel is true and a revelation from Heaven, but also the reason of their hope that they do cordially embrace it, and are interested in all the blessings which are promised to all true believers. When they, in proper times and circumstances, are asked the reason of this their hope by those who appear to want information and to have a right to it, and it may promote a good and important end, they can make the following answer: —

We all hope that we are friends to Christ, and are interested in the promises he has made to those who believe in him. But our hope is stronger or weaker at different times, according to the strength and constancy, or weakness and inconstancy, of our religious exercises, and the consciousness we have of them, and the sight of our own hearts. We sometimes attain a degree of assurance, or that confidence which excludes all sensible doubts; but many of us, perhaps the most, have often many doubts, and some of us have generally many doubts and fears. Others are generally more confident, and seldom, if ever, doubt of their being real Christians. What is the cause of this difference, it is impossible for us to determine; at least, in many cases. But this we are confident of, that it is owing to our imperfection in knowledge, discerning, or Christian exercises, if we be real Christians, that we have the least doubt of it, and do not always enjoy an assurance that we are friends to Christ. At the same time, we believe that the reason why some real Christians do not admit a doubt of their being Christians, is their imperfection in knowledge, discerning, and Christian experience. There are others who profess to be assured constantly, without one doubt for a long course of years, that they are Christians, and shall be saved, whose life and conversation discover that they know not what it is to be a *real* Christian. But we will proceed to give the reason of our hope.

In the first place, we would observe, that we trust we have been convinced of sin, and reproved for it, by the Spirit of God, as none are but those to whom he applies the benefits of redemption. Antecedent to our hearts being renewed by divine power to new and gracious exercises, we were, the most of us, if not all, brought to a degree of painful conviction of our sinful and miserable condition, which we believe is the

made to the Bible, because every Christian may not be supposed able readily to exhibit them. A more ample and able vindication of Christianity is contained in Dr. Trumbull's "Twelve Sermons on the Divine Origin of the Holy Scriptures," and Mr. Fuller's treatise, entitled, "Christianity its own Evidence," etc., both which are recommended as worthy of the perusal of all.

way which God commonly takes with those whom he designs to save. But as such conviction, and the exercises that accompany it, are so different in different persons, as to their degree, the length of their continuance, the attempts and exertions they make to help themselves, and the particular means by which they have taken place and continued, we shall not try to give account of them, which every one may do for himself, when it may be convenient. Besides, it would be deviating from our present purpose — which is, to give the reason of our hope that we are Christians — to enter into a description of the convictions of which the unregenerate may be the subjects. For no convictions or exercises which take place in the mind of a sinner, antecedent to his regeneration or his having a new heart, can be any scriptural evidence that he ever will be renewed and become a Christian. There is no connection in nature, or by the declarations and promises of Scripture, between any convictions and exercises of the unregenerate, and their becoming Christians. In any stage or degree of their convictions, change of sentiments, or external reformation, all may come to a full stop, and be lost; or, if they continue in any degree, they may never issue in a true conversion. We, therefore, mean to speak only of that conviction of sin, and humiliation for it, which is an evidence of our being regenerated, as it can take place only in a renewed heart, and is connected with salvation.

Our eyes have been opened to see that the law of God, which requires our obedience to it, respects the heart, and every motion and exercise of it which is of a moral nature, requiring that they all should be perfectly right and in conformity to it, and forbidding every thing contrary to this rectitude of heart, on pain of eternal punishment; that this law is perfectly right and good in all the requirements and threatenings of it. This has been attended with a conviction of the exceeding wickedness of our hearts, being wholly contrary to the law of God, and the source of every thing wrong in our outward actions. We could not but approve of the law as right, holy, and good, and felt that we were wholly blamable for every thing in our heart and life contrary to this law, and were wholly without excuse. Our heart appeared to us to be naturally wholly depraved and wicked, and all sin against God so infinitely criminal and vile, and we so unspeakably guilty, having done nothing but sinning against God and his law, that we felt and acknowledged from the heart that we deserved to have the penalty of the law executed upon us, that God would be just and glorious in doing it, and we must justify him in it, and remain forever without the least reason of com-

plaint. Thus we submitted to God, and accepted the punishment of our iniquity, and felt a calmness and pleasure we never experienced before, in viewing with delight the divine character exhibited in his law and works of creation and providence. We knew our heart to be naturally so totally depraved and wicked, hard, obstinate, and impenitent, that it would never be made better by us, or by any means or creature, unless it were renewed by the almighty power of God, which he was under no obligation to do; that we were utterly undone and lost in ourselves; that we were in the hands of God, as the clay is in the hands of the potter, to deal with us according to his sovereign pleasure; and we heartily acquiesced in this, in being thus dependent on him. And when we were brought to a more particular and realizing view of Christ, and the way of salvation by him, (of which we shall speak presently,) our sins and the evil that is in our heart appeared in a worse light to us, and unspeakably aggravated, in that it was necessary that Christ should suffer so much to make atonement for sin, in which such great and astonishing love to sinners was manifested. Our abuse of the gospel, and disposition to slight and reject Jesus Christ, of which we had been actually guilty in ways and instances innumerable, appeared to us great and aggravated beyond description, and discovered the exceeding malignity and baseness of our heart, the wickedness and obstinacy in refusing to accept Christ offering himself clothed with love and salvation. O, who can express or fully conceive of the magnitude and aggravations of the sin of impenitence and unbelief, of which they are guilty, who live under the gospel and will not embrace it!

Thus we have been convinced of sin, and reproved for it, and, we trust, have submitted to the reproof in the exercise of repentance, condemnation, shame, and abhorrence of ourselves. We think this is described by Christ when he says, "And when he is come, (that is, the Holy Spirit,) he will reprove the world of sin; of sin, because they believe not on me." And here we would observe, that this conviction of sin, from the beginning of it, and in its progress, has been attended with an evidence to us that the Bible is true and from God, in that it describes the character of man to be the same which we found ours to be when we saw the depravity and wickedness of our hearts. This description is given in the relation of the facts by which men in different circumstances have in all generations acted out and discovered the depravity and great degree of wickedness of their hearts, and in many particular assertions of the great and total depravity of the human heart. And the gospel is founded on this—that mankind

are all sinners to such a degree that they are wholly lost and undone, dead in trespasses and sin, enemies to God, and under the curse of the law, which is vindicated and honored, both in the commands and threatenings of it, by the gospel; and it asserts that man is naturally so under the power of sin that he hates the light of truth, and will not come to it, but chooses to remain in the darkness of sin, till he is born from above, and has a new heart given to him. We are assured that no men not inspired by God would have written such a book, which represents man in a light so contrary to what men naturally think of themselves, or ever would have thought of it. We are sensible that our ignorance of ourselves before we were convinced of our own sinfulness, as we have been describing it, was the ground of our ignorance of the Bible, and our criminal disregard to it; and by this conviction we have been confirmed in the truth of divine revelation as we never were before. And we are certain, beyond a doubt, that all the professed and open infidelity, or secret disbelief of the truth of the gospel, is owing to a want of a true and real conviction of sin. And in this view we do not wonder at their unbelief; for how can they who are so wholly ignorant of their own moral character, and of their standing in any need of the provision made in the gospel, believe and embrace it? How can they believe who are proud, and have so high an opinion of themselves, and seek honor one of another? As well may they who feel themselves perfectly sound and whole think they want a physician.

We would observe further, that the conviction of sin and reproof for it has not been a transient thing, which soon passed away and was forgotten; contrary to this, it abides by us, continues and increases. Our hope of pardon of all our sins, and of salvation by Christ, does not abate, but increases it. We see more and more the evil nature of sin, and the ill desert of it, as we increase in our sense of the righteousness and excellency of the law of God, the wisdom of the gospel, and the worthiness and glory of God and the Redeemer. And we daily see more and more of the sinfulness of our own hearts, our indwelling depravity, that sin cleaves to us in all our exercises, and defiles them. We have an increasing sense of our desert of everlasting destruction; of our constant and absolute dependence on Christ, his atonement and righteousness, for pardon and justification, and to renew our hearts, and for every right thought and exercise, of which assistance and grace we are infinitely unworthy; therefore, if we shall be saved, it must be all of free, undeserved grace. This conviction and sense of sin, and of our own helplessness and infinite

unworthiness, accompanies all our exercises of religion and piety, as essential to them, and increases as we grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

We proceed to say, when we were led to a particular view of Jesus Christ, his character, work, and design, all this appeared as a reality, and the wisdom, love, and grace of God shined in him, and the way of salvation by him, in a new, glorious, and affecting light. And we could not but highly approve of all this, and the whole character of Christ, and were filled with wonder and pleasure. We saw there was all fulness in Christ, enough to supply every want of such sinners as we were; that there was every thing in him that we could desire, and nothing undesirable; and that all he has for sinners is freely offered, without money and without price, to all who are willing to accept of it. This view and sense of heart of the truth of the gospel, and of the worthiness and excellency of Christ and approbation of his character, and the way of salvation by him, is so fixed in our hearts, that we have never lost it, though it is sometimes more clear, impressive, and affecting than at others.

Thus we have described the conviction and reproof we had of sin, and our consequent view and approbation of Christ and the gospel, as some of us have sensibly experienced these in this order, and it is the order of nature; for it is impossible that any man who is not convinced of sin and reproved for it, so as to submit to God, approve of his character as Legislator, and of his law, should understand and approve of the gospel. Though there may be some, yea, many of us, who have not so distinctly and sensibly discerned the operations of their own minds as to ascertain the order in which their convictions and exercises took place, yet they are sensible they have had them all, as to substance, sooner or later, in a greater or less degree. Some of us have remained a longer and more sensible time, after we submitted to God in the manner which has been described, before we had clear and affecting views of Christ and the gospel, than others, and our views of the latter have been more gradual. Others have had all crowded on their minds so much at once as not to be able to distinguish the former from the latter, so as to say which was first or last, from the perception of their own minds; and there is a great variety in the degree, way and manner, time and means, in and by which these things have taken place in different persons. Yet the work and effect appear to be the same, as to substance and the essentials of it.

Not one of us have entertained a hope that we shall be saved, or have been led to approve of the gospel and become

friendly to God and his law, wholly from a persuasion, somehow impressed on our minds, that Christ died for us and would save us, or something like this; for it is impossible that such a persuasion, be it ever so clear and strong, should be true, and, therefore, must be false, and a great and dangerous delusion; and they whose religion is built on this foundation only are building on the sand, and going to inevitable ruin.

Our hope that we belong to Christ, and shall be saved by him, is built on the evidence we think we have that we have cordially embraced the gospel, and have been brought to the exercise of the Christian graces — such as repentance, faith in Christ, love to God, our fellow-Christians, and our neighbors, or any of those Christian graces which are implied in these and connected with them. Some of us, we believe, have, at their first conversion, had such clear and impressive views of the truth and excellence of the gospel, that they not only knew it was divine, but also that they did embrace it with all their heart and strength of mind; that they were turned from darkness to marvellous light, and, consequently, should be saved; and the Spirit of God has so excited holy affections, and shined on his own work, as to be a witness with their spirits that they were born of God; and some have been so happy as to enjoy this evidence all their days, without much interruption, especially those who have been called to labor and suffer much for the cause of Christ and religion. There are others who, at the time of their conversion, have had such great light and strong affections, that they were confident, without the least doubt, that they had passed from death to life, who yet have soon fallen into darkness and doubts whether they were really converted or not; others, who have had such mistaken notions about conversion, and the feelings and exercises in which it consisted, and of Christians previous to their own conversion and after it, that when they really passed this change they did not know, and had not one thought that they were converted then and for a considerable time after. But as real Christian exercises continued, and perhaps on some occasions rose higher, upon reflection on their own past experience and exercises, they have entertained a hope that they were real Christians; and the evidence of this has increased on passing through trials, and their hope has grown into a confidence which often excludes all doubt. All these differences, and those which have been before mentioned, and many others not mentioned, may and do take place among real Christians, from causes and for reasons which we do not pretend to be able fully to explore and explain. If they have been convinced of sin, — have submitted to God, and embraced the gospel in the manner before

stated, and have and exhibit the further evidence that they are Christians, which we now proceed to mention, — they may reasonably think themselves such, and must be embraced by us as the friends of Christ.

Our evidence that we have really embraced the gospel, by which our hope is supported and strengthened, arises from those exercises and the conduct which have attended or followed the things which have been already mentioned.

When we understood and believed the gospel, as before described, it had a powerful influence on our hearts and affections, which is lasting, and never wholly lost; at some times less sensible, at others more so, and is on the whole, we hope, increasing. We were brought into a new moral and spiritual world, and our affections were taken off from the things, the enjoyments, and pleasures of this world, on which they were before fixed, as the great and chief good, and fixed on the infinitely important, glorious, and beautiful objects of the invisible and spiritual world revealed in the Bible. Our minds have been so renewed and transformed by divine power accompanying the gospel, that we hope we have no longer lived unto ourselves, but have with strong affection devoted ourselves to Christ, and given ourselves away to him, to serve him, and promote his honor and interest; and in our attention to his character and the truths contained in the gospel, our affections and the exercises of our minds are excited to a higher degree and greater strength than they ever were towards any worldly object, or possibly could be; at the same time, we are conscious that they are not flighty and imaginary, but solid and rational. We feel a fixed determination and resolution to follow Christ, and adhere to the practice of Christianity, by divine assistance; and whatever we were before, and though some of us were openly vicious, we are, by the knowledge of the gospel, and the power it has had on our hearts, become strictly conscientious in all our thoughts, exercises of heart, words, and actions, watchful and careful that they all may be conformable to the divine commands; and what is found contrary to these in our hearts, of which we see much, we lament, and with pain and sorrow condemn. As to all external vicious conduct in words and actions, we hope we are thoroughly reformed, and condemn and abhor ourselves for being guilty of them, and for all our sins; and have an earnest longing to be delivered from all sin, and to become perfectly holy, which we hope is what Christ means by "hungering and thirsting after righteousness." We think this change in us could not be wrought by any thing short of divine power, accompanying the gospel, by which it has been made unto us "the power of God unto our

salvation;" and we hope we have received "the spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."

We hope we have received from God the spirit of *love*, such love which in the nature and exercises of it differs from all kinds of love natural to man, and is peculiar to Christians, and conformable to the moral character of God, which consists in *love*. This love consists most essentially in disinterested good will, or goodness of heart. This has fixed our hearts in the first place, and chiefly, on God, in cordial and strong desires that he may be exalted, infinitely blessed, and glorified forever, and readiness to devote ourselves to answer this end; and when we reflect on the subject, and learn that God is glorifying himself by every thing that has, does, or will take place to eternity, we are highly pleased, and rejoice; and when we consider that the work of redemption by Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is suited to make the greatest display of the divine perfections, both in them who shall be saved and in them who perish, and that all the sin and misery that do or ever shall take place will serve to praise and glorify Christ, and promote the greatest possible good of the universe, and that Christ will bring the redeemed and all the friends of God to the highest happiness and glory in his eternal kingdom, even to unspeakably greater happiness than could possibly have taken place if no sin and misery had ever existed, and, consequently, there could have been no such character as that of God manifested in the flesh, and no such works as he has done to glorify God and redeem the elect, — when we consider and realize all this, we are filled with comfort, wonder, and joy, finding in this divine plan all that benevolence can wish, even the highest possible good of the universe. This is an object suited in the highest possible degree to please the benevolent, and to raise their gratitude to the highest pitch to the God of love and Redeemer of men.

This same love, which fixes our hearts on God, and renders us friendly to his being, felicity, and glory, and causes us to rejoice that he will be glorified, and produce the greatest good of which the created universe is capable, unites us also to all the friends of God, especially the friends of Christ among men, whom we consider as our brethren and sisters in Christ, who bear the image of Christ in their hearts, and are friends to, and laboring to promote, his interest among men, in which we also are engaged; who are the special objects of the benevolence, complacency, and delight of Christ. For these we have a peculiar friendship, desiring and rejoicing in their welfare, loving to serve them and do them all the good we can; and we have a peculiar complacency and delight in them and their

friendship, conversation, and company, which we cannot enjoy in others. This, we hope, is that love of our brethren which in the Scripture is connected with love to God, and is peculiar to true Christians.

We hope we have that benevolent, universal love to all our fellow-men which is peculiar to Christians, which leads us to wish them the greatest good they are capable of enjoying in this life and in the world to come, and to do good as far as we have an opportunity; and we hope we love even our enemies, so that whatever evil they do, or attempt or desire to do us, this does not make us to cease to wish them well, and to do them all the good we can, and to pray heartily for their welfare; always studying and endeavoring, if it be possible, to live in peace with all men.

We have been led by our acquaintance with Christ and the gospel, we hope, in some good measure to keep our bodies under, and crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts; to avoid all intemperance and unlawful sensual indulgence, and lay aside passion, anger, envy, and malice; and to put on humility, meekness, and a calm and quiet spirit, and to practise that self-denial and government of ourselves, our appetites and particular propensities and inclinations, according to the holy rules of the gospel, so as not to injure ourselves or any one else by the criminal indulgence of them. We hope our selfishness or covetousness, pride, and levity of mind have been so far subdued as not to reign in us; and that the contrary principles of benevolence, humility, and sober-mindedness have dominion in our hearts; that we set our affection on things above, and not on things on the earth; that we see the vanity of the world and the things and enjoyments of it, and are impressed with a sense of the reality, importance, and excellence of the things and enjoyments of religion, and feel unhappy when these things are in any measure out of sight, and our religious exercises respecting them do sensibly subside.

We love and greatly prize the Bible. It is better to us than all the riches in the world, or than all other books. We also prize and read the books which serve to explain the Bible and vindicate the doctrines and duties contained in it. We have great delight in reading and meditating on the Bible, especially at times when the truths we find there are impressed on our minds. We make the Bible the rule of our faith and practice

We spend much time, when we are alone especially, in meditating on the subjects of religion, and are pleased with religious conversation in the company of Christians. We have great pleasure in secret prayer, especially when, as we think, the Holy Spirit enlarges our hearts and helps our

infirmities, in a clear and affecting view of divine things. We are pleassd with joining with others in social worship when we have opportunity, either in the families where we live, in private Christian societies, or in public assemblies. The Christian Sabbath, and the institution of baptism and the Lord's supper, appear to us to be wise and good, suited to promote the highest good of men and the honor of Christ; and we endeavor conscientiously to attend upon them, and are much instructed and edified by the *preaching* of the gospel, when the great truths of it are explained and vindicated, and the duties therein revealed are properly urged, and the preacher with suitable engagedness declares all the counsel of God.

We hope we live in the exercise of an unconditional submission to God, without making any reserve with respect to all the events which do or shall take place, whether greater or smaller, and whether they relate more immediately to ourselves, or to the church, or to the world in general. We firmly believe that God has determined, and does order every thing, every event, both great and small, that comes to pass, according to the counsel of his own will, which is perfectly wise and good; and we are disposed and love to say, *Thy will be done*, with respect to all events which do take place now, or shall come to pass. Nor do we, and we dare not, ask for any thing in prayer to God which we do not know is agreeable to his will to grant, absolutely, but conditionally, *if it be agreeable to his will* to do it; if it be not, we are prepared to say, from the heart, *Thy will be done.* We have such a constant conviction and confidence that the divine will is infinitely wise, right, and good, that it is matter of support, comfort, and joy, that the Lord God Omnipotent reigns, and hath done, and will forever do, whatsoever pleaseth him, being infinitely above all control; so that his counsel standeth forever, and the thoughts of his heart to all generations.

We add, in the last place, that we trust that our conversation and conduct before the world is agreeable to our Christian profession and the holy rules of the gospel. If this were not true, but the contrary, we acknowledge all our supposed inward exercises, which have been mentioned as evidences of our Christianity, are not to be relied upon by us, and may be justly considered as mere delusion by all others. But if what we suppose be true, for which we appeal to all who are acquainted with us, and we have been brought by the influence of the gospel of the grace of God to deny all ungodliness and every worldly lust, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil world, we think it to be a strengthening evidence, in connection with our inward convictions and exer-

cises which we have experienced, and have now related, that we are the subjects of the power of divine grace; and that, whatever we once were, we are now washed, and sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God; and that all who behold our blameless and good conversation in Christ ought to consider it as an evidence in our favor, and of the truth and excellence of Christianity; and that they who speak evil of us as of evil doers, and falsely accuse us, ought to be ashamed.

Thus we have endeavored to give an honest and true account of the reason of the hope we entertain, that by believing the gospel it is become the power of God to us, to our salvation. We have omitted some things which might have been mentioned, and perhaps have made some needless repetitions. Imperfect as this account is, we wish it may prove some advantage to Christians, and matter of conviction to unbelievers.*

III. The reasonableness and importance of the direction and command which has been explained is to be considered and proved. This may be done by the following observations: —

1. It must be supposed that every real Christian is able to comply with this direction, and can give the reason of his hope, when properly inquired of and asked. If this were not true, the command, which extends to all Christians, would be, indeed, unreasonable and nugatory. It is, therefore, reasonable to suppose and be certain that every Christian has good reason for the hope that is in him, and can give it when there is a call for it. This is a subject which he thinks upon and studies more than any other. He certainly does meditate upon it night and day. He considers and examines over and over again the evidence he has of the truth and divinity of Christianity. The theme is familiar to his mind, and the evidence of the truth increases, in his view, in strength and clearness; and, of course, he is constantly, and with solemn concern, considering the evidence he has of his being a real Christian. He must, therefore, be always ready to give the reason of this hope that is in him. And it is reasonable and important that Christians should do this, when asked, because, —

* It is supposed that the evidence given above by Christians, of their hope of a saving interest in Christ, is common to every real Christian, without which no man has reason to think himself to be one. But in many other particulars, not mentioned here, Christians may differ, and one have views and exercises which another has not experienced in the same manner and degree, which may be a strengthening evidence to those who have them, and to those to whom they relate them, that they have tasted that the Lord is gracious. If any desire to see the subject treated more largely, they are referred to President Edwards, on "Religious Affections."

2. It is greatly for the advantage and benefit of Christians to be prepared and ready to give the reason of their hope, and actually to do it, when they are asked in a proper manner.

This has a greater tendency to keep their minds awake to these subjects than mere private meditation; to increase their knowledge in these things, and to strengthen and invigorate their exercises, and establish their own hearts in the ground and reason of their hope. Free and serious conversation upon interesting subjects of religion is attended with advantages to Christians, which could not be enjoyed if every one kept all his religious thoughts and exercises wholly to himself. This is confirmed by reason and the experience of Christians. And many, if not all, have found, by communicating to others the reasons of their belief in Christianity, and of their hope that they themselves were Christians, their hearts more established in the truth and importance of the Bible, and their hope of salvation by Christ become more clear and strong, by being quickened in their religious exercises.

3. A compliance with this command tends, many ways, to the good of others. It tends greatly to the benefit of Christians to converse with each other freely on these subjects; to communicate to one another their reasons for believing the gospel, and how, and in what way, they were brought to a clear conviction and assurance of the truth and divinity of it; and what have been their views and exercises, on which they ground their hope that they do cordially embrace the gospel and are the real friends of Christ. By this they become particularly acquainted with each other, and obtain the knowledge of the discerning, views, and exercises of their hearts, which could not be so well and fully obtained in any other way. This lays a foundation for an intimacy, love, and friendship, which are sweet, edifying, lasting, and peculiar to Christians. This tends to increase the knowledge of Christians, and establish their hearts in the belief of the truth, and excite and quicken their Christian affections, while they hear others give the reason of the hope that is in them. And this appears to be an important part of Christian communion, while they drink into the same Spirit, and mutually partake of the comfort and blessings of the gospel.

This also has a tendency to promote the best good of unbelievers. If Christians have nothing to say for themselves, and are silent, when they who are not Christians, with apparent serious desire to know, ask them to give the reason of their hope, this will greatly tend to prejudice them against Christianity and professed Christians, and lead them to think that the gospel is unreasonable, and cannot be supported. But

when they find Christians able and ready to give the reason of their hope, when asked, and they have it laid before them, they have matter of conviction that Christians can speak for themselves, and that Christianity is founded in reason and truth; and it may, by divine influence, reach their hearts, as the means of their salvation. And doubtless this has been the means of the salvation of many. But if this should not be the happy consequence, and the unbeliever persist in rejecting the gospel to his own destruction, the Christian has done his duty; and his labor shall not be in vain in the Lord, but answer some important end.

4. In this way Christians honor Christ and his cause. They who are not able, or are not disposed, to give the reason of their Christian hope, when properly asked to do it, must be numbered among those who are ashamed of Christ and of his words. Of such, he says, shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of the Father, with the holy angels. He will consider and treat them as a disgrace and dishonor to him, should he own them to be his disciples and friends. But, on the contrary, he says, "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father who is in heaven, and before the angels of God." As these, by confessing him before men, honor him, he will honor them before the universe, in his state of the highest exaltation and glory. They who are able and ready to give the reason of their Christian hope to those who ask them, to whatever shame and sufferings they may expose themselves by this, do hereby confess and honor Christ before men, which they cannot do effectually in any other way, if this be refused or neglected. And this is one important way for Christians to exhibit their true character, and show their zeal and courage in the cause of Christ, and honor and promote it in the world. How reasonable, then, and important, is this injunction of the apostle!

IMPROVEMENT.

I. From this text, and the subject, we have warrant to conclude, that they who are not able to give a reason for their hope in the sense explained, or they who refuse to do it to any one, at any time, are not real Christians, whatever they may pretend.

There are too many, who would pass for Christians, who can give no good reason why they believe Christianity to be true and divine, or why they hope to be saved by it. They can give no account of any particular, sensible impressions

made on their hearts by any of the truths of the gospel, or of any view or exercise which indicates a real change of heart. There are others to whom the general arguments for the truth of the gospel are familiar, and they can talk well and readily upon some of them; but if they be asked what their own inward exercises are with respect to the gospel, and what is the ground of their hope that they are Christians, their mouths are immediately shut, and they have nothing to say, unless it be to object against the propriety of asking or answering such a question, as no one has any business to inquire, or right to know, what are their inward exercises; every one ought to keep these to himself, etc. Others will inveigh against Christians *telling their experiences*, as it is called, and insist it is nothing but mere enthusiasm. All these may be justly considered as having no good reason for hoping themselves to be Christians.

There are others who are forward enough, and even too forward, to tell of their religious experiences, and give a narrative of their conversion, which they seem to think to be extraordinary and excellent. And they do it when there does not appear any particular call to do it. They appear to be proud of their religious experiences, and often speak of them in a light and ostentatious manner, directly contrary to meekness and fear. These are so far from obeying the apostle's direction, that they abuse and pervert it, and do not appear to be real Christians.

II. It hence appears how reasonable and important it is that Christians should give the reason of their hope, when they join to a church, and make a Christian profession, and that they should be asked concerning their doctrinal knowledge, and experience of the power of divine truths on their hearts. Churches have a right to know of such the reason of their hope, and with what views, exercises, and motives they desire to join them. And by this means they get acquainted with them as they could not in any other way, and a foundation is laid for future intimacy and Christian communion. They, therefore, must be blamable, and give reason to fear they are not Christians, who refuse to join a church because they cannot be admitted unless they will give the reason of their hope, as above explained. And those churches are guilty of great and criminal neglect who admit members without any examination of them respecting their doctrinal and experimental knowledge of religion, or asking them to give the reason of their hope. The consequence generally is, that the members of such churches have no particular intimacy or acquaintance with each other, not so much as they have with

the men of the world, or those who make no profession of religion, and know little or nothing of each other, and are in no respect distinguished from non-professors, but merely by having made a profession, and meeting together at the Lord's table.

III. This subject is suited to awaken Christians to a concern to be ready, and more ready than Christians in general have been and are, to give an answer to those who ask them the reason of the hope that is in them. They ought to strive to be yet better able to offer the most clear and convincing evidence of the truth, authenticity, and excellence of Christianity, and to increase in the strength and constancy of every Christian grace; that they may have increasing evidence in their own minds that their hope is well founded, and be able to give more satisfying and striking evidence to others that they are Christians indeed; and so shine as lights in the world, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation.

Christians have no reason to be ashamed of their hope and the gospel, let who will speak against and ridicule it. It has stood, and will stand, the test of the most severe rational trial and examination. The more it is examined by unprejudiced reason, the brighter its truth and divine excellency shine; and it will stand and prevail, until the light of it shall fill the world, as the waters cover the sea, and all the opposers of it shall be turned into everlasting darkness. Wherefore, let Christians gird up the loins of their mind, be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace which is to be brought unto them at the revelation of Jesus Christ, and be always ready to give an answer, to every man that asketh them the reason of the hope that is in them, with meekness and fear.

There is a special reason for a careful, courageous practice of this apostolic direction at this day, which is the time in which the sixth vial is poured out, predicted in Revelation, sixteenth chapter, when the spirits of devils are allowed to go forth to the inhabitants of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of the great day of God Almighty. These evil spirits are now among us, and have great influence on the minds of men, in the uncommon, rapid spread of infidelity, and all manner of error and vice. Christians, therefore, now have a loud and special call to watch and be sober, to vindicate the truth, and honor Christ and his cause in all possible ways. Let them hear and obey the words of Christ, which he spake with particular reference to this time: "Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame."

TWO SERMONS

THE

SINS OF MEN

ARE SO UNDER THE

DIRECTION AND CONTROL OF GOD,

AS TO GLORIFY HIM,

AND SUBSERVE THE GOOD OF HIS KINGDOM,

IN EVERY INSTANCE OF IT WHICH HE SUFFERS TO TAKE PLACE.

TWO SERMONS.*

SERMON I.

Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain. — Ps. lxxvi. 10.

In this Psalm, God's care and protection of his church is celebrated. In the midst of all revolutions, wars, and confusions which take place in the world, and the various and strong combinations of wicked men against his people, they are safe and happy under his care, who will effectually restrain all their enemies, and finally utterly defeat and destroy them, and give deliverance, peace, and salvation to his church.

In the words now to be considered, the absolute and universal dominion of God over all creatures and things is asserted, so that he can and will turn all the opposition which is made to him and his government, however strong and violent, and however long it may continue, to promote his own glory, and answer the best ends possible; and all the sins which would not subserve these good ends, he can and will effectually restrain, so that they shall not exist.

This very important and useful sentiment will be illustrated and established by a particular explanation of this passage of Scripture, and the inferences to be made from it.

"Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee." This is asserted not only as a truth, but as a most evident and certain truth, and of great importance to be believed and relied upon with the greatest confidence and assurance at all times, whatever seeming appearances there may be against it, and though we may not be able to see how it can possibly be true. This is expressed by the word *surely*, with which the sentiment is introduced.

The wrath of man comprehends all the rebellion and sins of men that ever have, or ever will take place, by which their hatred of God and his law and government, and strong opposition to these, is expressed. Mankind, ever since they have

* Written in the year 1800.

multiplied on earth, have, in general, been in arms — at war with God and with each other; and this war has, in numerous instances, been carried on with great apparent engagedness, wrath, and fury; in some more directly against God, and in others immediately against each other. All this is comprehended in the "wrath of man" in our text; and so are all the thoughts and exercises of heart and conduct, however private, and more or less apparent and strong, which are contrary to the law of God; for all these are of the same nature and kind with those sinful actions in which men are more apparently, and with greater wrath and violence, combined against God and each other. And all the sins of good men, whether committed before they were converted or after, are included in this expression, as they are as really in opposition to God and his law as the most open and avowed rebellion and rage against him, though not so strong and visible. Thus, all the sins of which men are guilty — whether greater or less, more secret or open, under whatever form or pretence they are committed — are included in "the wrath of man," as they are all rebellion against God, and a violation of his law, and opposition to his cause, church, and kingdom; though the more open and violent opposition to the divine government, to the church, and people of God, and to each other, may be more particularly intended by the expression. This is evident and certain, not only as all the sins of men are of the same nature and evil tendency, but they are all so united and combined, that, if any instance and degree of sin is made to praise God, it must do so in every instance for the same reason; and if it were not so, the assertion in the words before us would be so partial as to be attended with great uncertainty, and of little use and importance in the application of it, as will appear in our further attention to the subject.

"The wrath of man *shall praise thee;*" that is, shall honor and glorify thee. The sin of man shall, in every instance of it, be the occasion, and made the means, of the manifestation and display of the glorious character and perfections of God, which could not have been made to such advantage, and in so great a degree, in any other way, had not sin existed in every instance in which it has done, or ever will do. This is not owing to the nature and tendency of sin, considered in itself, — for it tends to directly the contrary, to dishonor him, and is a direct and awful opposition to the moral government, perfections, and existence of God, — but to his power, wisdom, and goodness, by which he is able and disposed to overrule all the rebellion against him, even every sin which is committed, to answer his ends and promote his own glory.

"The remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain;" that is, that wrath and those sins of men which are not suited and necessary to answer this end — to be so governed and overruled as to praise and glorify God — he will effectually restrain, and not suffer it to exist. This represents God as the supreme, sovereign Disposer of all things and events, ordering what shall and what shall not exist, from the greatest to the least, and directing the will and actions of men in every motion and exertion, so that all depend upon his will whether they shall have an existence or not; and this includes all the sins of men as really as any other event whatever. The counsel of God's own will determined whether there should be any such thing as sin and rebellion, and how much of this should exist — even just so much as should praise him, and no more; (which necessarily includes a determination concerning every instance or act of sin, whether greater or less;) as his determining that this earth should exist includes a determination how large it should be, of what materials it should be composed, and concerning every part, and every grain of sand, etc., of which it should consist. All this is necessarily implied in the words under consideration; for in determining that sin should exist, and just so much as would praise him, and no more, there must be a determination concerning every act of sin that should take place.

The existence of the wrath of man, the continuance of it, the height to which it should rise, and all the consequences of it, depended as much upon the will of God as did the existence of man, and of a particular providence to be exercised with respect to him from the first to the last, containing the wisest and best plan by which God is most praised and glorified and the greatest good promoted. These are so united and blended together, the one implying the other, that all must exist together in order to form a perfectly wise plan which shall be most to the glory of God and the greatest good of the universe; for when it is said the wrath of man shall praise God, it is equally asserted that all the sin which does or ever shall take place shall promote the greatest glory and happiness of his kingdom, and of all his friends who shall dwell in it forever; for their glory and happiness depend upon the glory of God, the manifestation and display of his glorious perfections, and will keep pace with this forever, — the former necessarily taking place and rising in proportion to the greatness and increase of the latter, — there being a necessary and infallible connection between them; so that whatever praises God, and serves to manifest and display his character and glory, equally promotes the happiness of all who are his friends, and the glory of his everlasting kingdom.

Of all this there is the greatest assurance and certainty expressed by the Psalmist in our text; but we have other strong corroborative evidence of these same truths, both from the Scriptures and from reason, which demands our careful attention.

The Scriptures will appear, beyond a possible doubt, to an attentive, honest mind, to be on the same plan, and to exhibit these same truths, from the beginning to the end. This is manifest in so many ways and instances that they cannot be all mentioned here. It will be sufficient to suggest the following: "The Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth." The wrath of Pharaoh was ordered and brought about by God in his providence on purpose that he might be praised and glorified — that his name, his character, and perfections might hereby be declared throughout all the earth. "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?" Here the sin and destruction of those who perish is represented as ordered by God for his praise, to manifest his hatred of sin, and his dreadful power in punishing sinners who are finally impenitent.

The innumerable predictions in the Scripture of events to be brought about, and which have been fulfilled by millions of millions of sinful exercises and actions of wicked men, and predictions of many particular sins which men should commit, are an incontestable evidence that God has the direction of all the sins of men, and that none can take place unless by his disposal, so as to answer his ends and promote his glory. Two or three instances may be mentioned to illustrate this remark.

The sins of the brethren of Joseph in selling him into Egypt, and all their anger and wrath which led to this, was determined and ordered by God for good — for his own praise and glory, and the good of his church. Therefore, God is said to have done it, and to send Joseph into Egypt, meaning it all for good. And in this way the wrath of Joseph's mistress in Egypt, and of her husband, did praise God, and could not have taken place had it not been necessary to accomplish the benevolent purpose of God; and they and the brethren of Joseph were restrained from all that wrath and sin which would defeat the prediction by the two dreams of Joseph, and not answer the purpose of God and praise him. The former were restrained from putting Joseph to death, as they once

proposed; and though Potiphar's "wrath was kindled" when he heard the false accusation against Joseph by his wicked wife, yet his wrath was so restrained that he did not take away his life, which had either of them done, the divine plan could not have been executed.

But the most remarkable instance of this is the sin and wrath exercised by men in the treatment of the Savior of the world, and putting him to death in the most cruel manner. This was all particularly determined and appointed long before by God, and foretold by the prophets. Hear what they who were inspired say of this in their solemn address to God: "Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is; who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth, against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done." (Acts iv. 24–28.)

All this scene of sin and wrath against Jesus Christ was determined and directed by the hand and counsel, the power and wisdom of God, which was necessary for the greatest display of the divine perfections in the redemption of sinful man which has ever been made, and could not have been made in any other way, and will be to his praise and glory forever, and the means of the unspeakably greater happiness and glory of all his friends, the members of his eternal kingdom.

And all this sin was ordered, to praise and glorify God, that he might hereby accomplish his wise and infinitely important designs. These sinners were restrained and prevented from committing all those sinful acts which would not praise God, but, contrary to this, would counteract his wise purposes. Thus Herod was not able to put Christ to death in his infancy, when he attempted to do it; and the Jews were not allowed to lay their hands upon him and kill him, though they desired and often attempted to do it, as this would not have been to the praise of God, but the contrary. They were restrained from effecting their purpose till the proper time came, when this horrid deed would praise God, and was necessary to his accomplishing the infinitely wise and important ends he had in view.

And, indeed, there is the greatest certainty that the sins of men in general, and the universal depravity, rebellion, and guilt of mankind, were necessary in order to there being such a

character as that of Jesus Christ the Redeemer, and the wonderful, glorious events which do and will take place in consequence of what he has done and suffered. For had there been no sin, by which the human race are fallen into a state of total ruin, there could not have been any Redeemer or redemption, by which God will be more praised and glorified than by all his other works; and, indeed, all his other works have reference to, and centre in, the glorious work of redemption, and derive their chief glory from this, of which the sin of man laid the foundation, which, therefore, is necessary for the greatest and most bright display of the perfections of God, and the consequent praises from all his friends, and their happiness in the enjoyment of him forever.

And as sin in general, and the most remarkable instances of it recorded in Scripture, some of which have been mentioned, are made to praise God, there is hence ground of assurance that it does so in every instance, and that this is true of every sin that ever has been or will be committed by man, and that not one sin which would not praise God will ever take place, had not this been expressly asserted in our text; and it is important to be observed, that all the natural evil which is the consequence of sin, which does or ever will exist, will answer this end, and is necessary for the brightest manifestation and display of the divine perfections, and, consequently, for the greatest happiness of all the friends of God. This is implied in the words of the apostle Paul, when he says, "We are unto God a sweet savor of Christ in them that are saved, and in them that perish." According to this, the gospel produces that which is pleasing to God, in the effect it has, not only in them who are saved, but also that which it has on those who perish. It is the occasion of discovering the total depravity and exceeding hardness and strength of the obstinacy of the human heart, in the universal, strong, and fixed disposition to reject the offers of mercy, which no means will overcome and subdue; which discovery could not be made so fully in any other conceivable way. The clear and striking manifestation of this will serve to display the righteousness and holy displeasure of God in punishing sinners with everlasting destruction, and inflicting a greatly aggravated punishment on those who perish under the gospel, as neglecters and despisers of Christ and the great salvation.

The same sentiment is expressed by this apostle in the following words: "What if God, willing [determining] to show his wrath, and make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the

vessels of mercy which he had afore prepared unto glory?" Here God is represented, not only as designing to show his power and his displeasure with sinners by fitting them for destruction, but also by this to make known the riches of his grace, in the salvation of the redeemed.

Thus it appears that there is the most clear and certain evidence from the Holy Scripture that all the sins of men that have or ever will take place, with all their circumstances, attendants, and consequences, shall praise God, shall serve to manifest and display his perfections, as otherwise could not have been done, and shall be the occasion of all that good, that glory and happiness of his eternal kingdom, which is implied in this; that it is the will of God that all this sin should exist just as it does and will do, to answer this end, and no more; therefore, all that sin which would not praise him he wills, shall not exist, and effectually restrains.

And all this appears most reasonable, and may be argued from the being and perfections of God revealed in the Scriptures, in so short and plain a way as to amount to a clear demonstration, to the reason of every honest, unprejudiced person, who will carefully attend to the subject.

God is omnipotent, and can do what he pleases. He is omniscient; his knowledge extends to every thing. He is infinitely wise and good. He sees what is the greatest good on the whole, what is the wisest and best end, and what are the most wise and best way and means to accomplish it, and is disposed, yea, has an infinite propensity, to do it. It is, therefore, certain that all things and events absolutely depended on his will from eternity for their existence and the manner of it; therefore, the plan of all future existence, of all creatures and events, and the particular manner and circumstances in which they should exist, was in the divine mind from eternity. And as it must be the wisest and best possible plan, containing all the possible good that Infinite Wisdom and Goodness could devise and desire, and Omnipotence execute, it cannot be altered in the most minute particular or circumstance, to eternity; and if this were possible, it would be infinitely undesirable and calamitous, yea, an infinite evil. It is matter of the greatest joy that "the work of God is perfect," being decreed by him from eternity; that, "whatsoever God doth, it shall be forever; nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it;" that "the counsel of the Lord standeth forever, and the thoughts of his heart to all generations;" that "he is of *one* mind, and none can turn or disappoint him;" who "worketh all things after the counsel of his own wise, unchangeable will."

This leads directly to the point before us. It must be determined by God whether there should be any sin and rebellion under his government and among mankind. This depended wholly on the will of God. He was able to forbid and prevent the existence of it; and if it was contrary to wisdom, perfect rectitude, and goodness, — that is, if he saw it was not wisest and best, and necessary to effect the greatest good, on the whole, that sin should exist, — he could, and certainly would, prevent the existence of it. There is, therefore, the greatest possible certainty, from the divine perfections, that sin does exist just in the manner and in that degree, and in every instance of it, with all the attendants and consequences of it which do or will take place, agreeably to the dictates and will of Infinite Wisdom and Goodness, as being necessary to accomplish the most wise and best end, the greatest possible good, of the universe; and the sin and misery which are not necessary to promote this end shall never exist, as it is contrary to Infinite Wisdom and Goodness that it should. We may be as sure of this as we are or can be of the being and perfections of God, or of any truth whatever, or even of our own existence. And to disbelieve and deny, or even to doubt of it, tends to atheism, and is really a degree of it.

To suppose that God has not power and skill enough to prevent the existence of sin, and was not able to withhold man from sinning, consistent with the perfect moral freedom of man, if he had chosen to do it, is to suppose he is really unable to govern the world agreeably to his will, and, therefore, is not to be trusted in a matter of infinite importance, and that he cannot be perfectly happy, but infinitely to the contrary, while he cannot prevent sin and misery taking place in a most awful, undesirable, and even infinite degree, most contrary to what he would desire and wish, were he able to prevent it. And if God were not able thus to prevent the existence of any of the sins which have been committed by man since his creation, then he cannot be supposed to be able to prevent the existence of any supposed degree of sin in future, in any moral agent; consequently, therefore, there can be no ground of assurance, or the least evidence, either from God or from moral agents, or from any other quarter, that sin will not take place in every moral agent, even in all those who are now perfectly holy, and those who are holy in some degree, in the greatest strength and to the utmost degree of which they are capable, and that as long as they shall exist. On this supposition, how could God know what would take place among his creatures? and how can he declare and promise that sin shall be forever excluded from the holy angels

and the redeemed from among men? What shall we do with the declarations and promises of this kind abundantly made in the Bible? Can there be any reliance upon them? And what reason has any one to trust in God to preserve him from sin, and form him to holiness, or to ask him to do this? Dreadful and horrible, and presumptuous supposition, most unreasonable, and big with consequences most terrible and destructive! It leads to the exclusion of divine revelation, and cuts off all trust and confidence in God, in all matters of the greatest importance, and excludes all belief of a particular and universal divine providence, and naturally leads to, and lands men in, the horrible darkness of infidelity and atheism.

But if God be able to prevent the existence of sin, and it was wisest and best, on the whole, that there should be no sin, then wisdom and goodness must oppose the existence of it; so that, to suppose that it is not best, on the whole, that sin should take place just as it does, is to suppose that God is neither wise nor good; for infinite wisdom and goodness, clothed with omnipotence, always prefer and effect that which is most wise and best, most for the glory of God and the greatest good of his eternal kingdom, and will certainly and effectually prevent the existence of every thing which cannot be made to promote this end. To deny or even to entertain the least doubt of this, and that all the sin, with its attendants and consequences, which does or ever will exist, is necessary to effect the greatest good of the universe, the brightest display of the divine perfections, and the highest glory and happiness of his kingdom, is equally to deny or doubt of the infinite wisdom and goodness of God, and to represent him unworthy of the implicit trust and confidence of his creatures, and so to leave them without any God, or one who is rather to be dreaded than loved and adored. How dishonorable to God this is, being as gloomy and shocking as atheism itself, every truly pious person cannot but discern and feel.

The Holy Scriptures, and our reason from the perfections of God, therefore, join in declaring this truth, and oblige us to believe and say, "Surely the wrath of man shall praise God, and the remainder of wrath he shall restrain," in the sense in which these words have been explained and vindicated, viz., that all the evil which has taken place, or ever will exist, both moral and natural, sin and misery does take place, in every the least and greatest instance of it, under the superintendency and direction of the infinitely wise and benevolent will of God, as necessary to promote the greatest possible good of the universe, his own glory, and the highest happiness of his moral, eternal kingdom. And he will restrain and prevent

the existence of all that which is not necessary to answer this end.*

This is equally true of all the sin and rebellion of the fallen angels, with all the attendants and consequences of this. Their sins are many ways connected with the sins of men. They were the wicked instruments of introducing sin among mankind, and are represented in the Scriptures as having a great hand in all the sins which are committed by men, and deceiving and tempting the whole world of mankind. They are allowed to come down to the earth in great wrath against God and man, and to go forth to the whole world, to excite them to unite in horrible war against God. But they are in the hand of God, and under his restraints; and when they have done all the work he designs they shall do, he will cast them into the bottomless pit, and shut them up, and set a seal upon them, that they shall deceive the nations no more till the proper time shall come to let them loose again. Thus the wrath of devils shall praise God, and the remainder of their wrath he shall restrain.

IMPROVEMENT.

This subject affords matter of sufficient support, of great comfort and joy, to the true friends of God, in the midst of all the evil, both sin and misery, which may take place. The Lord reigneth, clothed with omnipotence, infinitely wise and good, just and true. He is above all control. He hath done, and will do, whatever he pleaseth, in heaven and in the earth. He is infinitely above all possibility of any disappointment, or of being opposed so as not to accomplish all his designs in the best and most perfect manner. All the rebellion, sin,

* This truth has been, and still is, greatly opposed, and many objections are made to it. It has been often and by many asserted, that if sin answers so good an end, then sin is a good thing, and the more there is of it the better; that this is the greatest encouragement to sin; and there is really no crime in sin, if so much good comes by it, and, therefore, sinners cannot be justly blamed and punished for it. And it has been often said, by those who think and profess themselves to be wise, that this doctrine is inconsistent with human liberty, and really makes God the Author of all the sin that takes place. But the truth is great, and must and will prevail; and the folly of all these objectors, who understand neither what they say nor whereof they affirm, shall be manifest unto all men.

It is needless to attempt to answer any of these objections here, as this has been publicly done over and over again. If any have a desire to see them answered, they may find it done in President Edwards's "Treatise on Freedom of Will," Dr. West's "Essay on Moral Agency," Dr. Edwards's "Dissertation concerning Liberty and Necessity," the author's "System of Doctrines contained in Divine Revelation," and his "Sermons on Rom. iii. 5–8."

and suffering of creatures that do or ever will take place are so far from frustrating his designs, that they are intended and ordered to take place just as they do, as necessary to make the greatest possible manifestation of his perfections, and promote the greatest good of his kingdom. There is not the least sin in thought, word, or deed, nor the least instance of pain, nor can any evil exist, greater or less, which is not designed to answer some good end, so that it is best that it should exist just as it does. Then let the friends of God rejoice in Him who made them and all things else, and orders every event, great and small, for the best. Let the children of Zion rejoice in their King; yea, let them *always* rejoice.

The Lord Jesus Christ, our God, who was once manifested in flesh, is received up into glory, has sat down on the throne of the universe, possessed of all power in heaven and earth, and having all things, angels, men, and devils, in his hand, reigns over all, and will reign, till he has, in the best time and manner, completely accomplished his infinitely wise and good designs, destroyed the works of the devil, by wholly defeating, confounding, and disappointing him, and all who join with him, in all their attempts against him and opposition to him, and turning all they have done or will do, and all that does or will take place respecting them, to answer his own ends, to the greater glory of God, and to make his work in the redemption of sinners more perfect and glorious. He having, by his sufferings and obedience, made an atonement for sin and obtained righteousness for the justification of sinners, is thus exalted to give repentance and forgiveness of sins and everlasting life to all who believe on his name and come unto him; being able to save to the uttermost all them who come unto God by him. And as none of the human race will come to him — though all who hear the gospel are invited — unless they be drawn by the Spirit of God, and made willing by his power and grace, he in this exercises his sovereignty, and has mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. And his will is infinitely wise, right, and good. It is not best that all mankind should be saved, most for the glory of God, and the greatest good of the whole; but that the design of Christ in dying to redeem sinners may in the best manner and highest degree be answered, some must be given up to the destruction which they deserve; and who is better able to determine this, and how many and what individuals shall be saved, than He who is infinite in wisdom, rectitude, and goodness, who cannot make any mistake, or do the least wrong to any creature? Yea, who can do it but He? Every one who has a spark of true wisdom and good-

ness will earnestly desire that he may fix this matter with respect to every individual, and rejoice that it is and will be done by him. And who has a better or any *right* to do this than He who has made, and is the absolute and only Proprietor of, all creatures? "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor?"

To every benevolent friend of Christ the Savior, it is most desirable and pleasing that he should have all things in his hand, and save as many and whom he will, and leave whom he will to destruction. He has a peculiar right to this, since he has been at such infinite expense to redeem sinners, that he should accomplish the end of his sufferings and death in the best manner, and see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied, to have every thing effected with regard to the redemption of man so as in the highest degree to please his wisdom and goodness. To this end he has every creature and thing in the universe put into his hands, and he directs every motion and event among creatures to answer the purpose for which he died, which he will accomplish in the best manner, perfectly agreeable to infinite wisdom and goodness. He will save all of the human race who can be saved consistent with wisdom and infinite goodness. And to all who trust in him he is an almighty Friend and Protector, and will secure them from all evil, and cause all things to work together for their good, and will make them perfectly holy, and carry them through death to heaven in the best manner and time, and they shall inherit all things forever.

In sum, all things and every event are constantly under the direction and control of infinite wisdom, rectitude, and goodness, and are conducted and going on in the best manner, as fast as can be, to the most agreeable and happy issue possible, the greatest, most bright, and happifying exhibition of the divine character, and the highest glory and felicity of the everlasting kingdom of God, from which no creature will be excluded but those whose presence there is inconsistent with the glory of God and the greatest good of his kingdom, and, therefore, contrary to wisdom and goodness, and who do at the same time exclude themselves. Every thing, circumstance, and event is right, and all conspire to promote the greatest good, and, all things considered, it is, on the whole, best that they should be just what they are, and take place exactly as they do. No alteration can possibly be made, without injuring and spoiling the divine plan formed by infinite understanding, wisdom, and goodness. All this is to be seen with the greatest certainty in the infinitely important and

excellent character, works, and revealed designs of the glorious Savior of the world.

Surely no intelligent and truly benevolent person can believe and realize all this without feeling a peculiar pleasure and joy, which will more than support him under, and counterbalance, all the evil which he may feel, or that is in his view. He can with peculiar satisfaction and joy say, "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee; and the remainder of wrath thou shalt restrain. The Lord Jesus Christ reigns; let the earth rejoice. Rejoice always in the Lord; and again I say, Rejoice evermore; for he brings the greatest good out of all evil, and this shall certainly be the happy issue of all. He is the Rock, his work is perfect; for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth, and without iniquity; just and right is he."

Here it may be useful to attend to, and answer, several questions which may arise in the minds of some.

Question. How can we have any joy or comfort in any or all of this, while we do not know, and have little or no evidence or hope, that we are interested in all this good, but fear that Christ does not intend to save us, and that we shall perish forever? If we knew we were Christians and real friends to Christ, and should be saved, this would give us comfort and joy; but as we know not that this is true, and do often much doubt of it, what is all the good, which has been represented as the issue of all evil, to us, while we know not that we shall have any part in it, but may be cast off, and be miserable forever?

Answer. If you are wholly selfish, and have no desire that God may be glorified, and the greatest good of his kingdom promoted, and can take no pleasure in the prospect and assurance of this, unless you are certain your own personal happiness will be secured and promoted hereby, then this discovers and decides your state and character, that you are not a real friend to Christ and his church, and no true Christian. All your hope and thoughts of this are a mere delusion, and ought to be immediately dismissed. You must be born again of the Holy Spirit, and become new creatures, before you can be Christians. But if you have any true benevolence, and are friends to Christ and his cause and interest, and the greatest happiness of his church and kingdom, you cannot but have comfort, pleasure, and joy in the view and assurance that all things and every event, however evil and of a bad tendency in itself, will be overruled by him for his honor and the greatest good of his kingdom; that his interest is secure, and will be promoted by every thing that takes place, without considering your own personal interest, whether this is secure or not.

And, indeed, you cannot know or have any ground to think or hope that you have an interest in Christ and shall be saved, until you have this benevolent affection towards Christ and his people, and are conscious that it does take place in your hearts in some degree, or those exercises which imply this or are implied in it. But when these exercises and benevolent affections take place in your hearts, and arise to such strength and constancy, that, when you reflect upon your own views and feelings, you are conscious that you have them, that you are pleased and have enjoyment and comfort in the thought and assurance that Christ will get honor by all the sins of men and opposition made to him by men and devils, and the consequent ruin of those who perish, and that all will issue in the greatest possible good, on the whole, you will have reason to hope and conclude that you are friends to Christ, and shall partake in all the happiness and glory of his eternal kingdom, and may, in this way, arrive to a degree of assurance of it; and this is the only proper and safe way of obtaining a true and well-grounded hope and confidence that you are real Christians and shall be saved; and as this hope increases and continues, your comfort and joy will be increased. But your comfort and joy does not so depend upon or consist in this, that, if this confidence and hope should give way to doubt and fear, all your comfort and joy would cease; you could, and would, even then rejoice in the character, glory, and happiness of the Savior, and that all things were conducted by him so as to answer the best end; that he would save all that can be saved consistent with wisdom and goodness, with his glory, and the greatest good of his church, whether you are included in that number or not; and if you find you can, and do, rejoice in this view, it is a good, perhaps the best, evidence that you belong to that number.

There are too many professing Christians whose religious comfort and joy appear to consist wholly in a hope or confidence that they shall be saved; their comfort rises in proportion to the degree and strength of their hope, and when that sinks and fails, and is even given up, their comfort is all gone, and all is darkness and gloom; so that all light and comfort with them in their religion consists in thinking, or a hope, that their own personal interest is secure, and all their religious darkness and trouble arise from doubts of this. Their comfort first began in a hope and belief that they should be saved, and still depends wholly upon this. This does not look like the experience of true Christians, but to be a wholy selfish religion, as different from real Christian exercises as darkness is from light.

Ques. II. But must Christians pay no regard to their own

interest? May they not feel and dread personal pain and misery? And may not their own sins and sufferings occasion grief and sorrow? And ought they not to feel for the sins and calamities of others, and the sinful, wretched state of mankind in general, and mourn and lament, in the view of these evils? Must they always be all joy and gladness, and feel no mental pain and sorrow?

Answer. A Christian ought to regard his personal interest according to its comparative greatness and real worth; but must have no interest of his own, distinct and separate from the general interest, or the highest and best interest of the whole universe. This is the interest to be regarded and sought supremely, and the interest of every individual of this whole, according to the importance and worth of it; and as this must be small and inconsiderable in comparison with the grand interest of the whole, it must be disregarded and given up, if it be inconsistent with the greatest good of the whole; and he must and will have an aversion from, and dread of, personal pain and suffering, as it is in itself an evil; but this is consistent with rejoicing at the same time in the happiness of others, and in the greatest general good, and he will have a peculiar satisfaction and joy when he believes and realizes that his pain and suffering will promote the good of the whole, which is in all instances true, by the superintending care of the Redeemer. Thus the apostles, when they were beaten and put to shame by the council of the Jews, "departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name."

And Christians ought, and cannot but be affected with the sin and misery of mankind, so far as it comes under their view, and to be pained and grieved when they attend more particularly to it; for it is in itself a great, and to us incomprehensible evil, and might well fill a benevolent man with insupportable pain and sorrow, and sink him into the most distressing gloom and overwhelming grief, were he not certain that all this is under the direction and particular care and regulation of uncontrollable wisdom and goodness, and has taken place because it is necessary for the greatest good, on the whole, and no more shall exist than shall answer this end, the glory of God and the greatest possible happiness of his kingdom; so that it is, on the whole, best there should be just so much evil in the universe as there is and ever will be. But when he attends to this, his sorrow is in a great measure turned into joy; and could he have as clear and comprehensive a view of the good that will be the issue of all the evil that takes place as the inhabitants of heaven have, all his sorrow would entirely

cease, and nothing would interrupt or abate his pleasure and holy joy. But in this imperfect state, where so much evil is felt, and present before our eyes, and the good which will be the consequence of all this, though believed to be certain, is not so present and in so full and clear view as the evil, the latter, especially at times, will occasion pain and sorrow. The good man, in this very imperfect state especially, cannot be equally attentive to every object at the same time; and when his attention is particularly turned to the evils that take place, and his mind is impressed with them, he will have pain and sorrow, though he does not doubt that all things are ordered for the best, and that all the evil will issue in the greatest good; while the latter is more out of sight, or less the object of his attention, and, consequently, makes a less impression on his mind. At other times his attention is fixed on Christ, his character, works, and designs, and the good he will bring out of all evil; his faith is strong, and realizes invisible things, that all things are going on well, and could not be better, as they are guided by infinite wisdom and goodness. His pain and sorrow are turned into comfort, joy, and praise.

Thus the Christian has his joys and sorrows in this imperfect, sinful state; but the latter never take place to that degree as wholly to exclude the former; but in the midst of sorrow he has joy, and, in a sense and degree, rejoices *always*. So the apostle Paul "had great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart," in a view of the sin and misery of his nation; yet in the midst of his sorrow he had matter of joy. Therefore, he represents himself "sorrowful, yet always rejoicing." And he commands Christians to rejoice in the Lord *always*, and repeats the injunction, "And again I say, *Rejoice*. Rejoice *evermore*." And our glorious Savior, when in a state of humiliation on earth, did in his human nature rejoice in spirit, in the divine will, and sovereign, wise disposal of all things and events respecting the children of men. (Luke x. 21, 22.) Yet he wept over Jerusalem, when his mind was impressed with the sin and ruin of the inhabitants of that city; and though he rejoiced and was glad that Lazarus was dead, as it was necessary for the glory of God and the good of his disciples, yet, when he saw Mary and her friends who were with her weeping, he groaned in spirit, was troubled, and wept.

Ques. III. We believe a Christian may have such comfort and joy as has been described; but as some are doubtless deceived, and make great pretensions to this joy, who have only a false and spurious kind of joy, we should be glad to know how, and by what, the former may be distinguished from the latter?

Answer. This may be in some measure illustrated and decided by the following particulars: —

1. The Christian's joy is pure, calm, and serene, and is better felt than expressed; therefore does not make him talkative, and forward to tell of *his* joy, unless when it appears necessary for the instruction and benefit of others; and then he is disposed rather to speak of the matter and reason there is of comfort and joy than to dwell on his own comfort and enjoyment. He is humble, and has a low and mean opinion of himself, in proportion to the degree of his comfort and joy.

2. This joy does not tend to exclude or abate a sense of the evil of sin, and the ill desert of it, and of the misery which takes place in consequence of it; but, on the contrary, the Christian has a clear view of his own sinfulness, the hatefulness of it, and of his desert of evil, when he rejoiceth in the Lord. His joy does not abate his sense of this, but rather increases it. Nor is he insensible of the evil of sin in general, and of the misery that comes, and will come, on men for their sins; while he rejoices that the wrath, even all the sins and misery, of man shall praise God.

Therefore, they whose religious joy arises from a belief that there is no great evil in sin, and that God cannot justly — or, if he could, will not — punish it with everlasting destruction, have only a groundless and false joy.

3. This joy is so far from making persons careless, slothful, and inactive in religion, that it is attended with directly the contrary. They hate sin, and endeavor to avoid it and seek deliverance from it, and strive to prevent and suppress it in others, as far as they have opportunity and ability. They are fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. When they rejoice that he is praised, *they* seek to honor and praise him in all possible ways. These cannot be separated, as it would imply an express contradiction. They not only praise God, but pray to him. Their comfort and joy is not inconsistent with engagedness and pleasure in prayer, for the latter is implied in the former. They pray for deliverance from all that which appears to them to be evil, and for all things which they judge desirable for themselves and others, and which appear most for the glory of God and the advancement of his interest and kingdom among men.

But, in all their desires and prayers, they are resigned to the will of God. They subordinate all to that, and say, "If it be consistent with thy will" — desiring that his will may be done, which they know is best, most wise, and good, however contrary it may be to their partial views and particular desires. And in this resignation to the divine will and acquiescence in

it there is implied an earnest desire and prayer. "Thy will be done" may be a strong and earnest petition, and always is so when it is attended with a proper sense of the desirableness and importance that it should be done in all instances as implying the greatest possible good, and with a disposition to rejoice in it.

It is, therefore, certain that they are strangers to the joy of true Christians, who, under a pretence of believing that all things and events are fixed by the will of God, and take place in the best manner, and that whatever is is right and best, are wholly careless and easy with regard to their own state and conduct, and whatever sins and evils take place — have no desires to cross any of their inclinations, and to be virtuous and holy, living in the neglect of fervent devotion, prayer, and praise.

On the whole, —

This subject is suited to excite Christians to attend to and improve the truth contained in the text which has been explained, so as constantly to enjoy the support and comfort which they need, and which is offered to them, in the present dark and seemingly evil state of things in this world. Were it not for *this* truth, there would be no support for Christians, but their minds would be involved in the most painful gloom in the view of their own sinful state and the sin and misery which abound in the world, directly tending to the dishonor of God and the ruin of all that is desirable — attended with disorder and confusion of which no bounds or end can be realized or known, or so much as conjectured. The good man would have no place on which he could set his foot, to prevent his sinking and being overwhelmed in darkness and despair.

But when the Christian attends to this truth, and feels the certainty of it, his feet stand on a solid foundation — on a *rock* which cannot be moved. He feels calm, and has divine support and comfort, in the midst of the storms and raging waves which toss themselves as if they would overwhelm the world. He looks above all these threatening appearances, and beholds a serene sky, and knows the storm will soon be over, and the dashing waves will cease, and the sun will shine more bright and pleasant than if there had been no storm. The Christian, whose mind is firmly established in this everlasting truth, and is sure that all things will issue well, and that it is best they should take place just as they do, that good will be the issue of all the evil, though he cannot but be affected with the evils, moral and natural, with which he is surrounded, and that more or less at different times, yet will

have sufficient support, and be filled with comfort and joy, especially at times, knowing that the Lord reigns, that the wrath of man shall praise him, and the remainder of wrath he will restrain.

It therefore becomes Christians, as their duty and interest, to attend to this truth, taken in the whole extent of it — to keep it in their minds, and maintain a constant assurance of it, whatever appearances there may be to the contrary. It is to be feared that many Christians are greatly deficient in this. They dwell too much, if not wholly, on the dark side of things, on the evils which are in their view, and suffer much gloom, dejection, and pain of mind, for which there is no good reason, and which they might escape if they looked more at the bright side, presented in the truth which has been considered, and kept it always in view, and their tears of sorrow would be in a measure dried up, and succeeded by tears of joy. It is observable that Christians, when they meet with great disappointments and calamities, either personal or public, in which the interest of the church and religion is concerned, are obliged to make use of this truth for their support and comfort — "The Lord reigns, and orders every thing right and well," etc. And if Christians would keep this in constant view, and see and realize the hand of God in every event, they would have constant support and comfort, and live more to the glory of God. And this tends to destroy all contracted, selfish views and feelings, and to enlarge their minds, while they attend to the divine character, government, and kingdom, and the power, wisdom, and goodness by which all things in the universe are directed and governed. And the more they realize and are pleased with this, the more they resemble the inhabitants of heaven, and are prepared to be members of that happy society, and join with them in rejoicing and praising the only wise God their Savior forever and ever. Amen.

SERMON II.

ADVERTISEMENT.

The author hopes the candid reader will not be displeased with his speaking so much in the first person singular in the following discourse. Such egotism in general is disagreeable to him, and he has, therefore, avoided it in his other discourses, as the reader will perceive; but the following being of a peculiar kind, seemed to render it necessary, and it is hoped will not be thought selfish, assuming, or improper.

The Author's Farewell to the World.

Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain. — Ps. lxxvi. 10.

These words have been explained in the preceding discourse, and it appears that they contain the following important truth: —

That God, in his infinite wisdom and goodness, has determined that there should be just so much evil, both moral and natural, as has been, now is, and ever will be, and no more; as it is most suitable and necessary to make the brightest display of his perfections, and effect the greatest good, glory, and happiness of his eternal kingdom; therefore, it is most wise and best that all this evil should exist; and every instance of it, greater or less, God will overrule to answer this end, in the highest possible degree.

It has been shown that this truth, being believed and properly improved, is a sufficient and the only foundation for the support, comfort, and joy of the benevolent friends of God, in all the darkness, confusion, sin, and misery with which they are surrounded.

And now, standing on this sure, firm foundation, this immovable, everlasting rock, I look around, and, as far as I am able, view the world of mankind, and take my leave of them, expecting soon to put off this my tabernacle.

I am old, having lived near fourscore years, and I know not the day of my death, but have no reason to think it is far distant.

It is my earnest wish to leave a blessing behind me when I shall go hence; and I have the consolation to know I shall. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. He lives and reigns head over all things to the church. He will

reign till all his enemies are put under his feet, till he has destroyed the works of the devil, and perfectly completed the work of redemption; yea, he will reign forever. He will cause all the kingdoms of this world, in which Satan has reigned so long, to become his own kingdom; and all nations shall serve him, and be holy and happy under his influence, protection, and smiles. Of this blessed time the Bible is full of predictions and promises. This blessing I leave behind me for the world to enjoy long after I am dead; for I am sure that the time is coming when all the families and nations of the earth shall be blessed in Jesus Christ. The assurance of this affords support and consolation to me, while I am surveying mankind in their present sinful and wretched state.

It is doubtless impossible to make an exact calculation of the number of inhabitants now living in this world, which shall be agreeable to the truth, and may not err in fixing on millions less or more than do actually exist. But they who have attended to this point, and, perhaps, are best able to judge, have supposed that there are not less, but perhaps more, than *eight hundred millions* of people now living on earth; that of these, four hundred and eighty-one millions are heathens, one hundred and forty millions are Mahometans, and nine millions are Jews. All which amount to six hundred and thirty millions. There remain one hundred and seventy millions, which are supposed to be nominal Christians. Of these, ninety millions are Papists, thirty millions of the Greek church, and fifty millions Protestants.*

It is not probable that this computation is exact, according to the truth, and some may make a different one; but this is, perhaps, as near the truth as any that can at present be made. I cannot speak to all these so as to be heard, and there is but a very small number, compared with the whole, whom I shall ever know in this world, or who will know or hear of me. But I am sure to meet, not only all who are now in the world, but all the countless millions who ever have lived, or shall exist hereafter to the end of the world, at the day of judgment, when I shall know the character of every individual person, and mine will be inspected and known by all.

The earth is far from being filled with inhabitants. There is room for many more, probably a thousand, yea, many thousands, to one of the present inhabitants. The earth, when properly and fully cultivated, and the produce prudently used to answer the ends of living, would support a multitude of inhabitants, even beyond all our present calculation. Noah

* This was written in A. D. 1800.

and his sons, and in them every generation of mankind who have descended from them, received a command from God to multiply and *fill* the earth. This command has not yet been properly regarded by mankind, but, instead of this, they have, in a great measure, depopulated the earth by wars and cruel slaughters of each other, and the practice of a variety of destructive vices, by which multitudes have been immaturely cut off in every age. And, by reason of the great corruption and horrid rebellion of mankind in every age, God has been pleased to show his displeasure by destroying the bigger half that have been born in their infancy or the early days of youth. But the time is coming when a generation shall rise up who shall know and fear the Lord, and love their neighbor as themselves, and shall learn war no more, and there shall be none to destroy or hurt in all the earth; and, in the practice of piety and every social virtue, under the smiles of Heaven, they will be happy, and multiply and fill the earth.

According to the foregoing calculation, the greater part of mankind now on the earth are in a state of heathenism; and there are near as many Jews and Mahometans as nominal Christians, who are professed enemies to Christianity, and are in as bad, yea, worse state than are the heathen.

It is the preceptive will of God our Savior that all men should come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved. He commanded his disciples to "go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." And every one to whom the gospel is preached is commanded to repent and believe the saving truth. It is, therefore, wholly owing to the disobedience and wickedness of man, both Christians and heathen, Mahometans and Jews, infidels and atheists, that the gospel has not been preached to all mankind, and that they have not all embraced it to the salvation of their souls.

Notwithstanding man's natural disposition to oppose, hate, and reject the gospel, and the many difficulties and dangers which hence arise in attempts to spread the gospel among the heathen and others, it is the duty of Christians to exert themselves, and take every proper method to propagate it far and wide, to the utmost of their power, looking to and trusting in Christ, to cause his word to run and be glorified. Love to Christ, and benevolence to men who are perishing in darkness and sin, are sufficient, if properly exercised, to induce Christians to unite in the prosecution of this most important affair. Christians enjoy the richest treasure by the gospel, and they will not diminish but increase their own part in it by their attempts to impart it to others.

Within a few years past a great and extraordinary zeal and

engagedness to propagate the gospel among the heathen and others who have it not preached to them has appeared, and been uncommonly exerted, both in Europe and America. And I observe with approbation and pleasure, that all the societies which have been formed are agreed in the great and leading doctrines of the gospel, which have been called *the doctrines of grace*, or Calvinism; and that they appear, in all their publications, to express a spirit of true piety, and zeal to maintain and propagate these doctrines, and to approve of no missionaries who do not appear cordially to embrace them, and to be truly pious, as I am certain that this is the only scheme of doctrines which is consistent with itself, and with the Bible, and suited to convey saving truths to the minds of men.

This is an important and commendable design and work, and worthy to be pursued with increasing zeal and steady perseverance by all Christians, whatever difficulties, disappointments, and apparent discouragements may occur. And though the attempts should not be succeeded in the conversion of one heathen, yet they who honestly, and from truly Christian principles, engage in this cause, however much they risk or expend, and even if they lose their own lives in it, they will really lose nothing by it, but meet with a rich reward. And if but few souls shall be gathered to Christ and be saved, this will more than compensate for all the cost and pains that can be bestowed in the cause; for one soul is worth more than ten thousand worlds. And though Israel be not now gathered, and there shall be no great and remarkable success at present, yet they shall be acceptable in the eyes of the Lord, and it will, in some way, though now unknown to us, serve to promote and hasten on the happy day when the heathen shall be given to Christ for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession.

In this view, I rejoice when I am taking my leave of the world, and heartily wish success and God speed to all who are, and the many more who hereafter shall be, engaged in this happy, glorious work.

Of nominal Christians above two thirds are Papists, or of the Greek church, and near one third are Protestants, who are not more than the sixteenth part of the inhabitants of the earth. The Popish church has corrupted the gospel, introduced innumerable superstitious institutions and practices, and an idolatry in many respects more gross and wicked than that of the heathen. In Scripture the head of this church, the pope, is called antichrist and the beast, who, with all his followers, who receive his mark, are doomed to destruction. The

Greek church is sunk into ignorance and superstition, and have departed from the essential truths and duties of Christianity. We are not, therefore, to look into either of these churches for many, if any, real Christians. As public bodies, they will cease to exist, when real Christianity, in the truth and power of it, shall prevail through all the world. I, therefore, take my leave of them, as by the Scripture doomed to destruction.

The Protestants, who began their separation from the church of Rome in the sixteenth century, when what is called the reformation from Popery took place, under the preaching and writings of Luther and Calvin, and many other reformers, are now divided into various different sects, parties, and denominations, differing in the doctrines which they hold, and in their manner of discipline, and in the mode of administering the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper, and the proper subjects of these ordinances, and in the mode of worship, etc. In the time of the reformation, and for some time after, the body of the reformed agreed in the most important and fundamental doctrines of the gospel, which appears by their confessions of faith and catechisms, which they published, and are the same, as to substance, with the doctrines which Calvin published in his "Institutions." The articles of faith of the church of England, formed not long after the reformation from Popery, are after the same model — Calvinistic. About the middle of the seventeenth century, a confession of faith and catechisms were formed by an assembly of divines, called together from England and Scotland, by both houses of the English parliament; which confession and larger and smaller catechisms were approved and ordered to be published by both houses of said parliament, and the parliament and general assembly of the church of Scotland. And they were subscribed or assented to by all ranks of people in England, Scotland, and Ireland. This confession of faith, and these catechisms, are what may be, and is generally, called *strict Calvinism;* and they have been assented to, taught, and maintained by many to this day.

But doctrines contrary to those contained in this confession of faith were introduced among Protestants not long after the reformation from Popery, and were considerably spread, when the abovesaid confession was formed; such as are called Arminianism and Antinomianism, and those held by Arians and Socinians, who not only agree with Arminians in rejecting Calvinism, or what are called *the doctrines of grace*, but deny the divinity of Jesus Christ. These doctrines have had a great increase and spread among Protestants since that time,

especially in this century; and the prevalence of Deism, to which these doctrines have a direct lead, has taken place, and real, practical religion has decayed, and vice of almost every kind has increased and abounded in proportion to the propagation of these doctrines, which are opposed to Calvinism, and have a tendency to spread infidelity.

About the middle of this century the attention of multitudes was roused, and there was a great and remarkable revival of religion in Britain, Ireland, and America, principally under the preaching of Whitefield and those who joined with him. Great numbers were hopefully converted, and embraced the doctrines of Calvinism. But there was too great a mixture of delusion and false religion, which has continued and been spreading since that time, while the whole has been the means of the increase of light and knowledge of the truth, by which true religion has been distinguished from that which is false, and the important doctrines of the gospel have been pointed out and vindicated, in opposition to the various errors which have been embraced by many, by the writings or preaching of those who have appeared to have come to the knowledge of the truth. But by far the greater part, even the body of the people, appear not to have partook of the benefit of this revival of religion; and most who lived in the time of it were prejudiced against it, and opposers of it, and many of those who at first appeared friendly to it apostatized, and either embraced errors and false religion, or abandoned themselves to vice and infidelity; and on the whole it has been the means of hardening men in sin, and against the truth and all true religion, and against Christianity itself; so that religion has been gradually decaying, in general, from that time to this, and the above-mentioned errors, and Deism, and even atheism, have been fast spreading, and greedily embraced by multitudes, in opposition to all truth. And vice and immorality have kept pace with this, as the natural effect.

Deism and atheism, which are near akin, as the former really implies the latter, and naturally runs into it, both being not only opposition to Christianity, but to all religion, have for a century had a rapid spread in Germany, and more or less in all parts of Europe. This has been promoted, with uncommon zeal and secret cunning, by a number of pretended philosophers, who, with their abetters, have at length effected the public expulsion of Christianity from France. And they do not stop here, but are determined, as soon as possible, to effect the extirpation of Christianity and all religion from the Christian world. Yea, they extend their views further, and are attempting, as far as they shall have opportunity, to put

an end to all religion of every kind, and all civil government, in every nation on earth where there is any degree of these. They have extended their views to America, and have emissaries, both secret and more open, attempting to spread these pernicious principles; and there are multitudes, especially of the rising generation, who are prepared to receive them.

Though there have been of late some instances of apparent revival of religion, both by zealously embracing and promoting Calvinism, or the true doctrines of the gospel, and exhibiting the power and life of experimental religion in practice, both in Europe and America, yet the great body and mass of the people are evidently fast growing more and more corrupt in principle and practice. But very few of the whole are willing to make a profession of religion, and by far the greater part of professors do not understand or believe the important, essential doctrines of the gospel, and are far from a steady, zealous conformity to the holy rules of it in practice, and shining as lights, in distinction from the world. Attending on public worship is more and more neglected and despised; and profanation of the Sabbath is more common, by irréligious visits, vain companies, and walking or riding abroad in companies. Family religion is generally excluded; and family government and good order, and the religious instruction and education of children, are become very rare, and generally neglected; which gives a dark and melancholy prospect respecting the religion and morals of the rising and future generations. And in proportion to the neglect of public worship, and the profanation of the Sabbath, and the increase of profaneness and other vices, there is an increasing desire and engagedness to attend the foolish, wicked, and corrupting diversions of the stage or theatre, and other sinful assemblies and amusements.

The present state of religion, both as to the doctrines and practice of those who profess to believe that Christianity is a divine institution, and of those who are professed infidels, affords a clear practical demonstration of what the Bible abundantly holds forth, viz., that true religion, in principle and practice, cannot be preserved and maintained in the world, but will soon vanish, be rejected, and lost, if the powerful influences of the Spirit be withheld, and do not attend the preaching of the gospel, and the administration of the instituted ordinances of it, to the saving conversion of sinners, and the quickening, strengthening, and comfort of believers. When men remain under the power of the natural corruption and ignorance of their minds, not being born of the Spirit, and taught of God so as to come to the knowledge of the truth, by

the renewing of their minds, their carnal mind, which is enmity against God, will either lead them to reject the gospel wholly as a mere fable, and not worthy of credit, or to corrupt it in the doctrines and duties which it inculcates, so as to render it conformable to the corrupt inclinations of their own hearts. And this is no new discovery, but the evidence of it has existed and been increasing ever since Christianity has been published to the world, by the treatment it has received from all to whom it has been preached, except those who have known and acknowledged that they were brought to understand and embrace it by the invisible and powerful operations of the Spirit of God; that, were it not for this distinguishing, sovereign goodness of God, and they had been left to themselves, they should not have believed and embraced the gospel, and discerned and loved the truths and duties there revealed, but should have persevered in ignorance and disobedience.

This evident fact is a continual, standing evidence of two things, viz., that Christianity is a wise and holy institution, and from Heaven, and that mankind are totally depraved.

1. This is an evidence that Christianity is from Heaven, and a holy institution; and that two ways. It is an evidence that it is from Heaven, from its being continued and maintained in the world to this day, notwithstanding the great and continual opposition of mankind to it, and their unwearied attempts to extirpate or corrupt it. Had not Jesus Christ been from heaven, and was he not gone there to maintain his cause and church on earth, so that the gates of hell should not prevail against it, agreeably to his promise, by the constant exertion of his power and invisible influence, Christianity and the church could not have lived to this time, but the great truths on which the true church of Christ is built would have been discarded and forgotten long ago; and it is an evidence that Christianity and all the essential doctrines of it are from Heaven, and that it is a holy institution, that it is so disagreeable and displeasing to fallen, depraved men, by which they are disposed to oppose and reject it, unless corrupted and altered so as to be agreeable to their taste and their reigning lusts. Had the gospel been of men, a mere human contrivance, it would have been suited to the natural humor, taste, and inclinations of man, so that there would be no need of a supernatural change of heart in order to their cordial approbation of it, and compliance with the doctrines and precepts of it. But if it be from Heaven, it must be a holy institution, and, therefore, disagreeable to fallen man. Were it suited to please the corrupt taste and sinful inclinations of man, it would be worse than nothing, and could not be from Heaven. But since

the true doctrines and precepts of Christianity are directly contrary to the heart and reigning inclinations of fallen man, so that he must be born again and be a new creature, in order to his being a friend to the gospel, or even understanding and believing it, it is certainly an excellent, holy institution, and must be from Heaven. Agreeably to this, Christ said to the Jews, "I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not. If another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive." And Paul said, "If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ."

2. This is an evidence of the total depravity of mankind; not only that they are fallen and depraved, but that they are *wholly depraved* in all their moral powers — have not the least degree of right moral taste and inclination, but are wholly under the power of the contrary. As the Scripture says, "They are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." When a revelation comes from Heaven perfectly wise, holy, and good, and suited to relieve and save man from his fallen, wretched state, revealing a Savior infinitely excellent and glorious, full of grace and truth, and offering complete, eternal salvation to every one who is willing to have it, — if man had the least degree or spark of moral goodness or inclination, yea, if he were not wholly an enemy to God and every thing right and holy, he would not hate and reject such an offer, but gladly embrace it. Mankind would not join together to invent some way to corrupt and spoil it, or root it out of the world, were they not total and strong enemies to God and all that is wise and good, and consequently enemies to their own good. "This is the condemnation" of man, as totally corrupt and an exceedingly criminal enemy to God, "that light is come into the world, and men have loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

But to return to the view which has been given of the present state of the world. It appears to me, as it also doth to some noted writers on the Revelation, that the sixth vial, mentioned Revelation xvi. 12–16, is now running, and began to be poured out at the beginning of the eighteenth century, or some years before, and will continue to run some part of the nineteenth century, perhaps near fifty years of it. Under this vial John "saw three unclean spirits, like frogs, come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, [or wonders,] which go forth unto the kings of the earth, and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of the great day of God Almighty." Eight years ago I published a particular explana-

tion of this passage in a "Treatise on the Millennium." It is needless to repeat that. I shall only observe here, that this is a representation of the uncommon spread and prevalence of error and wickedness of every kind over all the world, among all orders of men, especially the Christian world, under the influence of the devil, by which men in general will be in an unusual degree combined, engaged, and armed against the reigning God the Savior, and shall produce great, strange, and wonderful events; and when the iniquity of the world is become full, and men in general are ripe for destruction, God will come forth out of his place to punish the world for their wickedness, in a most terrible battle against them, by pouring the most dreadful calamities and destruction upon them, under the seventh and last vial of the wrath of God, which is represented in this chapter, verse seventeenth to the end, and in the nineteenth chapter, verse eleventh to the end. This will prepare the way for the introduction of the millennium, when the church of Christ shall increase and prosper, in an unexampled state of purity and happiness, for a thousand years.

In the view of this present dark and evil state of the world, and the prospect of yet greater wickedness and more dreadful calamities which are to take place for ages and generations to come on the stage, I now take my leave of it, with a mixture of grief and joy; knowing that all this wrath of man shall praise God, and all the sin and misery that will take place is necessary for, and will issue in, the most glorious display of the divine character, and the greatest glory and happiness of Christ and his church; and that he will hasten an end to these evils in this world as fast and as soon as it can be done consistent with his wisdom and goodness, and so as to bring on the millennium in the best manner and time.

I think their notion is entirely without foundation, yea, contrary to Scripture, who imagine that the end of the world may come, and Christ come to judgment immediately, at any day or hour now. Christ has foretold many things which must come to pass between this time and that grand event. Nor, as they think, would the preaching of such a doctrine tend to awaken people, and prevent their going on in security and sin, more than what constantly takes place before the eyes of all, in the death of others, and reminding people that no one is secure from death one hour; that Christ may come when they think not, and carry them out of the world, which will be as fatal to them, if they are living in sin, as if he had come to judgment.

Nor is their opinion founded on any reason or Scripture, who think that but few of mankind, on the whole, will be

saved. What our Savior says of this respected the then present time. His words are in the present tense: "Few *are* saved." He does not say what will be in other ages of the world. He has foretold a time when all the kingdoms of the world shall be brought into his church and kingdom; and so many may exist in this time as to outnumber all that will be left.

Therefore, while I am taking my leave of the world of mankind, who now lie in the wicked one, and are going on from bad to worse, I may look beyond this evil time, and with pleasure hail the incalculable millions of holy and happy sons and daughters of Adam who shall yet arise and live on the earth, and be glad and rejoice in the glory of Christ and their salvation.

How many and which of the nations which are now heathen or Mahometans will be preserved as a distinct people through all the revolutions and dreadful judgments which are to take place preparatory to the millennium, and will be then, or before, converted, and share in the blessings of that day, cannot be now determined. And this is true with regard to the various nations now in Christendom. Some of them — and we know not how many — may become extinct in the evil times that are coming, and the gospel be carried to other nations who do not now enjoy it. It is enough for us to know that every event and circumstance with respect to this will be ordered in the wisest and best manner by Christ, so as to accomplish his purpose, to glorify himself, and effect the greatest good of his church. As to the Jews, we know that mercy is in store for them. They shall, more or less of them, be preserved a distinct nation, through all the terrible shakings of the earth which are coming, down to the millennium, and have a large share in the blessings of that day.

I take my leave of them, being now in a scattered, afflicted state, under the power of an evil heart of unbelief, in the assured, joyful prospect of the great good that is coming to them, when their reception into the church of Christ will be life from the dead, and the unsearchable depth of the riches both of the wisdom, goodness, and knowledge of Christ will be forever adored by all the redeemed. O, how shall all their past and present wrath, together with their future reconciliation, praise him!

When I turn my attention to Christendom, with pain and abhorrence I pass over "the beast" — the pope and his adherents, even all who receive the mark of this beast — as doomed to certain destruction; and I am without any assurance that those who belong to the apostate Greek church will escape this dreadful evil.

But what shall I say of or to those who are called Protestants? Great numbers who live among Protestants have professed to disbelieve and renounce Christianity, and many have written against it, and attempt to prove that it is a mere fable, not worthy of the least credit. And though all they have written has been fully and often refuted, they persist in their infidelity, and their number appears to be greatly increasing, either openly or more secretly,—while they are assiduously endeavoring to insinuate their tenets by all possible means wherever they can have any influence, (which they appear to have, especially on the rising generation,)—so that they will soon be greatly the majority, if they are not so now, unless Christ interpose by his irresistible power.

I take my leave of all these, knowing that, if they persist in their unbelief, they will die in their sins, and perish in a greatly aggravated and everlasting destruction. But at the same time I have the peace and comfort which no man can take from me, in the assurance that, though they are infinitely worse than lost to themselves, they are not lost to Christ and his church; for this their infidelity,—a peculiar kind of aggravated wrath,—and all the consequent evil which is coming upon them, will turn to the praise of the Redeemer forever, and he will be more honored, and the redeemed more happy, than if such infidels had not existed.

Still a more affecting and dreadful sight, if possible, opens to my view. There is in the Protestant world, and among us, an innumerable host of people, who, though they do not profess to disbelieve the gospel, yet do not obey it, but *live* in opposition to it, and in a constant, allowed disobedience to Christ, and that not only by refusing to do what he has commanded, but by greedily practising what he has forbidden. It would take many pages to enumerate half of the open vices which are practised by Protestants, notwithstanding all the restraints of civil government. These vices abound among those in high stations, and in the low—rich and poor, learned and ignorant, old and young. From all these I take my sorrowful departure, knowing that, unless they repent, the time is coming when Christ will say to them, "Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity. Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting punishment." But, in all this sorrow, I am rejoicing that Christ will cleanse the world from this wickedness, and when the wicked are turned into hell, he will fill it with holy inhabitants; and he will be more glorified, and the church more happy, than could be if all this wickedness had not taken place.

Another numerous class of Protestants now come into view,

who are too ignorant or erroneous to be saved. Many of these are included in the class last mentioned, but not all; for whether their lives be vicious, or what may be called moral, if they be ignorant of the gospel and the truths of which it consists, or if they do not believe these truths, but deny and reject them, they cannot be saved by it.

I am sensible that I am now exposing myself to the indignation and contempt of an increasing number, whose sentiments on this head are what they call catholic and liberal. These will say to me, "What right have *you* to make a creed for us, or any other man, and insist that all must believe and cordially embrace the doctrines you hold, in order to be saved? We believe it is of no great importance what a man's creed is, or whether he has any, if he be honest and sincere in what he *does*, and worships God, and lives a good moral life."

To these I have to say, Ye are some of those whom I mean to include in the above description. You assert that the doctrines or truths revealed in the gospel, if there be any, are of no importance; so that he who does not believe them, whatever he believes, and he who is totally ignorant of the truth, may be saved, as well as if they understood and believed the truth. You are yourselves totally ignorant of the gospel, and appear to be real enemies to it; for if what you assert were true, the gospel is worth nothing, and men may be saved without as well as by it.

He only who believes the gospel, as preached by the inspired apostles, can be saved. If we exclude the system of truth contained in the gospel, we exclude the gospel, for it wholly consists in a revelation of these truths. Some of them are these: that all mankind are sinners, in a state of total moral depravity by nature, in consequence of the apostasy of their first parents, and under the curse of the righteous law of God; — that Jesus Christ came into the world to save such lost sinners by making a full atonement for their sins — by suffering in their stead, and meriting eternal life for them by his obedience, and power by the Holy Spirit to renew and sanctify them; (all which is infinitely too great for any mere creature to do;) therefore he must be a divine person — really God with us, manifested in the human nature; — that, in order to be saved, men must be renewed unto holiness by the Spirit of God, (in which he is the first mover,) by regenerating them; of which none have any desert or claim. "Therefore he has mercy on whom he will, and whom he will he hardeneth;" which naturally, and even necessarily, introduces the doctrine of the divine decrees with respect to man and his salvation, and consequently respecting every thing else; and of election,

and the certain perseverance of believers to complete salvation; — that men obtain pardon and justification by their union to Christ — by their believing on and trusting in him for this and all they want, which they receive, not out of respect to any goodness, worth, or desert in themselves, or any thing they do; — that they are wholly dependent on God for every degree of right disposition and will to do what God requires, and not in the least on themselves; and this absolute dependence on God extends to every thing in which they have any concern; — that their salvation is, therefore, altogether, from beginning to end, the effect of undeserved, free, sovereign grace; — that true holiness consists not at all in selfish affections, but in disinterested love to God and man; — that they who do not believe this gospel, and are not partakers of this holiness, and persevere in this way, will perish in everlasting destruction.

These doctrines are all contained in the gospel, and, with others not mentioned, which are implied in these, compose a system of truth, which is really the gospel, and is often in the Scripture called *the truth;* to which Christ came to bear witness; which men must come to the knowledge of in order to be saved; which all true Christians are represented as cordially embracing and walking in, as the bond of their union and love to each other. They, therefore, who do not receive this truth, and love it, but in their hearts hate and oppose it, do not believe the gospel, are not friends to it, and cannot be saved.

This is evidently true of the Arians and Socinians, who deny the divinity of Christ, and, consequently, the need of any proper atonement for sin, and oppose many other doctrines of the gospel, in which they agree with those called Arminians. These latter deny the depravity of man by the sin of Adam, or that he is totally depraved, and that they stand in any need to be regenerated by the irresistible influence of the Spirit of God, in order to love God, and do those good works by which they may please God and be saved. They are, of consequence, enemies to the doctrine of the decrees of God, as they respect the agency of man in the concerns of his salvation, as being, with the other doctrines which they deny, contrary to the natural selfishness, pride, and imagined independence of man. There are others who hold a mixture of inconsistent doctrines, and do not professedly join with Arminians, but evidently symbolize with them in many respects, and so as to exclude the pure, consistent, and essential doctrines of the gospel.

Some there are, who have been properly called Antinomians,

who hold that Christ has so abolished the moral law, that Christians are not under obligation to obey it. And there are many others, who are real Antinomians, who deny that any man can or ought to love the moral law, or God who made it, so long as he is under the curse of this law, and considers himself so, and has no hope of being delivered from it; but he must have some discovery that God is merciful to sinners, and that there is salvation for them by Christ, before he can love God or his law. And many, perhaps the most of this class, hold that no man can love God or the Redeemer until he sees and believes, on good ground, that God loves him and designs to save him; that Christ died for him in particular, and will save him. The love, and all the religion, for which all these plead, is altogether selfish, and has not a spark of real Christianity in it, but is directly contrary to it. Jesus Christ has declared it to be so. (Matt. v. 43, to the end of the chapter.) He says that the love to others which is grounded on their love to us is a selfish, wicked love, which men of the worst character do exercise; that Christian love is of a different and contrary nature, and so disinterested that it will extend to its worst enemies.

There are many who, though they do not expressly avow this selfish doctrine, by which all religion is bottomed on self-love, but discard it, yet describe the religious views and exercises of Christians as consisting very much or altogether in selfishness, and urge the choice and practice of religion wholly from selfish motives. And if it be urged that true religion will lead Christians to those disinterested affections and that conduct of which Christ has set us an example, they cannot understand, but rather oppose it.

There is another class of people, called Universalists, who hold that all men will be finally saved. There has been for a few years past a considerable increase of those who profess to embrace this sentiment. Of these, some are Arminians, others are Antinomians, and some enthusiasts. Few or none of them appear to understand and believe the pure, consistent doctrines of the gospel. They do not of late appear to increase who openly espouse this doctrine, and yet adhere to the Bible; and most of these soon lose their zeal in their cause. And their belief appears to have its natural effect on them, and leads them to live a careless, irreligious life; and numbers by degrees give up the Bible, and sink into infidelity. There is reason to believe that there are many who do not profess to embrace this doctrine, to whom it is so pleasing that they wish and hope it to be true; and it has great influence upon them, and leads them to a careless neglect of and concern about

religion, and of strict morality, and so hardens their hearts that they are deaf to all admonitions, and will rather give up the Bible and turn infidels than admit that any will be miserable forever.

All these, even those whose outward conduct is not immoral, and who appear religious, who yet cordially embrace and are at heart pleased with the errors which have been now mentioned, and whose religious exercises are grounded upon and conformable to them, are strangers to true religion, and in the way to destruction; and all these false doctrines and notions of religion, and all the practical religion that is built upon them, will be consumed by Christ with the spirit of his mouth, and destroyed with the brightness of his coming. Of these, therefore, I must now take my leave, without the least disposition to flatter them, or hope of their prosperity in the way they are going; and with a pleasing certainty that all their errors and false religion shall be utterly abolished by Christ, and that he will be praised and honored by all these errors and this opposition to him, however wide may be their spread, and though they may continue yet a considerable time, even to the end determined.

I must now turn to the public professors of religion, the members of the Christian churches, of various different denominations, among Protestants.

The pastors of churches, or the clergy of every degree and character, come first into view. It is doubtless true that the clergy are the leaders and principal instruments in all the moral good and evil which takes place in Christendom. All of the clergy in the Protestant world, who must be classed with those before described, by the erroneous doctrines they hold, or not preaching any scheme of doctrines, but who really leave out all the essential truths of the gospel, and confine themselves to what may be called spurious heathen morality, and all of immoral lives, whatever doctrines they preach, are, of course, excluded from the number of truly Christian ministers. Jesus Christ has fixed their doom. "Many will say to me, in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name?" etc. "And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." To these I cannot say, "God speed," when I take my leave of them, lest I be a partaker of their evil deeds.

But I must be allowed to sift the clergy more closely; especially those of the United States of America, who are not excluded by the foregoing. A great body of ministers in these states are professed Calvinists, differing, however, in some points, and are generally irreproachable in their moral conduct.

But they are asked seriously to consider whether they have good evidence that they have been born again, agreeably to the Scripture account of that great change, and find themselves real friends to Christ and his cause, expressed in all proper ways.

It is to be feared that many not having ever passed this change is the reason why they bring forth no more good fruit, and so much which is more like bad than good; in that they do not appear to encourage experimental religion, or preach upon it clearly or much, if at any time; and though they would be thought to be Calvinists, they appear to dislike, and never preach, some of the most important doctrines of Calvinism; such as, the total depravity of man; God's first moving and sovereign grace, in the regeneration and conversion of sinners; and the doctrine of the decrees of God, taken in the only proper, strict, and extensive sense; that he has declared *whatsoever comes to pass.* They ignorantly say, It would be better to say, God *foreknew* whatsoever comes to pass. They choose to call themselves *moderate Calvinists;* but might as well, and perhaps more properly, be called *moderate Arminians.* But I should be willing to lay all these names aside, as many appear to wish, were it not the shortest and most convenient way to denote the general scheme of doctrines which different persons embrace. This is agreeable to the practice of the Christian church in all the ages of it, whether more corrupt or more pure; and no inconvenience has attended it, that I know of, which would not attend any other method. All of this class I must leave, with the fears concerning them expressed above; and while I fall under their resentment and censure, as narrow and bigoted in my sentiments, and very censorious, I cheerfully leave the matter to the day when the Lord will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the heart.

But I return to those who embrace the doctrines of the reformation, of Calvin, and the chief and leading doctrines contained in the Westminster confession of faith, as being agreeable to the Holy Scriptures, and who give satisfactory evidence that they are the subjects of divine, regenerating grace, and are friends to Christ, and heartily engaged in his cause. I embrace you with cordial, benevolent affection, wishing you success in your work, and that you may be faithful unto death. It is to be wished you would give yourselves wholly to the work of the ministry, and that you were all *students*, constantly laboring to make advances in the knowledge of divinity, by reading, meditation, and conversing with those who are pursuing the same study of the Scripture. We

live in evil times, when Christianity, and especially true religion, in principle and practice, is greatly opposed, and fast decaying in general, as if it would soon all be gone; and we have reason to believe these evil times will grow much worse. But this is so far from being a reason for sitting still and unactive, that it ought to be a motive to great and constant exertion to promote the cause of Christ, and oppose the flood of error and iniquity, which is coming in with a mighty, rapid stream. The cause of Christ will not be lost. His truth is great, and will prevail. Good is to be done now, and some sinners must be converted; and blessed is the man who has the greatest hand in this work. We are commanded to pray to the Lord of the harvest to send forth more laborers into his harvest; and we have assurance that our prayers will be answered, in his own way and time. He will fill the church and the world with ministers, furnished with such abilities, fortitude, diligence, zeal, knowledge, and true wisdom, as to exceed any of us, beyond, far beyond our present conception. In this view, I overlook the present dark scene, and take a cheerful farewell of you and of the world.

Having taken my leave of the clergy and pastors of churches among Protestants, I must not pass over the private members of these churches, in very different worldly circumstances and stations, and of various denominations. When all of this class, who are either ignorant of the essential doctrines of the gospel, or deny and oppose them, and imbibe contrary errors, as most agreeable to their hearts; and all those who take the name of Christians, but do not depart from iniquity, and lead vicious lives; also all mere formal professors, who do not live up to their profession, and bring forth good fruit, but in their general conversation and conduct mix with the men of the world, and live more conformably to them than like real Christians; finally, all those who appear strangers to experimental religion, or any thing like being born again, — when all these are excluded and set aside, as not the proper objects of Christian charity, how comparatively small will be the number of the remnant who are left! And yet it is probable that among these, some, if not many, are, under a fair appearance, but mere hypocrites! The happy number of true Christians cannot be certainly known by any man, and some of them are not known by themselves to be real Christians; but the Lord knows who are his, and will own and take care of them.

They are all united in believing and loving the truth as it is in Jesus, and have all drank into the same Spirit, under whatever form they worship, and whatever denomination they have taken. The distinctions by which the various

denominations of Christians are now divided will doubtless vanish, when a greater degree of holiness and light shall take place, and prejudices by education or any other means shall be removed; and Christians will be united and of one mind in those things about which they are now divided, and their creed, in which they agree, as to substance, now, will remain the great bond of union. They who understand and believe that the wrath of man shall praise God, and that the remainder of wrath he will restrain, as all true Christians do, must, to be consistent, believe the doctrines preached and written by that great reformer JOHN CALVIN, and, consequently, the above-mentioned confession of faith, in the substance of it; and, therefore, must be agreed in the chief articles of their creed; for all this is really contained in this passage of Scripture, of which every unprejudiced, candid person must be convinced, if he will carefully attend to the words, and to the explanation that has been given of them.

To you I address myself with peculiar pleasure. You live in a time pointed out in Scripture prophecy as peculiarly evil; and present evils, which have lately increased, both moral and natural, doubtless will yet make a rapid progress, till they shall rise to a height which is beyond your present conception, and you have no reason to expect to live to see the end of them. Yet these words of the text, and the abundant promises made to the church, and to every true believer, are a sufficient ground of constant support and consolation to all real Christians. It is a ground of support and comfort to reflect and know that but a small part of the whole time of the trouble of the church yet remains to fill up the measure of her suffering, though the last conflict may be most severe. I believe we have not yet attained any light from Scripture, from which we can be sure that Christians will not suffer persecution, and that a more trying and severe one than any that has yet taken place, before the millennium comes on; but this will not be, unless it be necessary for the good of the church, and to introduce the time of her prosperity in the best manner; and all this wrath of man, be it more or less, of longer or shorter duration, shall praise the Redeemer.

The church will live and prosper, and will come forth from the furnace of affliction as gold purified seven times. "And the redeemed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." And why may not Christians begin their song now? Though you do not see the glorious Redeemer, yet, believing, you love him who orders all things perfectly well, takes the best care

of the church, and of every one who trusts in him, and will glorify himself by all things to the highest degree. Well may you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, while you watch and keep your garments, striving together for the faith of the gospel, and in nothing terrified by your adversaries. With joy I now bid you a hearty, though I hope not a long farewell.

But New England, the place of my nativity, demands my more particular attention. Aside from my partiality in favor of this part of the world, I believe that all men of observation and judgment in this matter, who are acquainted with the Protestant world in general, and with the religious state of New England, from the first settlement of it, will grant there has been the appearance of more true religion in principle, profession, and practice, and a more regular moral conduct, among all orders and ages of persons, in this part of America, than in any other part of the Christian world of equal extent. Boston, the metropolis of New England, has been, till within less than fifty years past, a place of more religious order, in the observation of the Sabbath and other religious duties, a better education of children, and of a more decent, sober, moral conduct of the inhabitants in general, than of any other equally or more populous city or town on the face of the earth. And the people in general in New England were disposed to pay respect to religion, to maintain family religion and worship. The Sabbath and public worship were regarded and attended upon by the inhabitants in general. The churches were considerably large, and a degree of discipline kept up. Children were under government, instructed, and catechized. Gross, open vices were in a great degree restrained. Leading men in public stations were in general exemplary, and the bigger part of people were intelligent in things of morality and religion, and of a good behavior.

But, alas! "how is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed!" Of late years, a great and rapid degeneracy has taken place, both in the doctrines and duties of religion. Family worship, and a proper government and religious education of children, are generally neglected. Error and ignorance in religious concerns, and vice and immorality in conduct, are greatly increasing. Infidelity, Deism, and atheism are spreading as an irresistible torrent, and many, if not most, of the youth and rising generation are growing up ready to imbibe error and infidelity. If these shall have their natural course, unless divine influence interpose, and put a stop to them, New England will soon become as famous for irreligion, infidelity, atheism, immorality, and heathenism, as it has been for the contrary, and Christianity will be wholly

excluded and forgotten. It is true that all Christian ministers, and others in public and private stations, who are friends to the cause of Christ, ought to hope, pray, and strive against this evil, and exert themselves to the utmost, in all proper ways, in opposition to the cause of sin, Satan, and evil men, and be ready to die in the cause of truth and religion. In the pleasing hope of this, I embrace you all, whether personally acquainted with you or not, with the most cordial affection and benevolent farewell. At the same time, I take my leave of New England, with the painful fear and prospect of the evils which have been mentioned, flying to my text, and the truths contained in it, for support and comfort.

Rhode Island, particularly Newport, the capital, in which I have lived near thirty of the last years of my life, now demands my special attention.

This town has been long noted for the many different religious sects and denominations into which the inhabitants are divided, while the body of the people have been considered, I believe justly, to have very little true religion, if any; and they have appeared more dissolute, vicious, erroneous, and ignorant than people in general are in other parts of New England. And there has been no general revival of religion, or reformation, to this day; and the moral state and character of the inhabitants in general has not become better, but the contrary. The extraordinary and general revival of religion in New England and many other places, about sixty years ago, did not reach Newport in any considerable degree. While the heavenly dew fell copiously on other places, this town received but a few scattering drops, and remained almost wholly dry. There are a great number of families in this place who have no appearance of any sort of religion in their houses, and who never attend on any public worship; and there are many individuals of this character in other families; and many others, who, though they attend public worship sometimes, yet not constantly nor often. All these, doubtless, include the greatest number of the whole inhabitants; and a great part of them are so inattentive to religion, and so ignorant, that they have really no religious principles; others have imbibed, and are strongly fixed in, religious maxims and notions, as contrary to the Bible as darkness is to the light. Of those who constantly attend public worship, including the professors of religion, very few of them maintain any family worship or religion, and by far the greater part are so immoral in their conduct, or ignorant or erroneous in their notions of religion, as to fall vastly short of the Scripture character of true Christians.

There have been a number of real and excellent Christians in this town, of different denominations, who are now in heaven; and doubtless there are some yet among us, but there is reason to conclude that the number of such is greatly lessened, and that there are now but very few. Of you I take my affectionate leave, wishing you may increase in number, and shine, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, as lights in the world.

The slave trade, and the slavery of the Africans, in which this town has had a greater hand than any other town in New England, must not be passed over unmentioned here. This inhuman trade has been the first and chief spring of all the trade and business by which this town has risen and flourished; which has, therefore, been built up, in a great measure, by the blood and unrighteous sufferings of the poor Africans. And this trade is yet carried on here, in the face of all the light and matter of conviction of the unrighteousness and aggravated iniquity of it, which has of late years been offered, and against the express laws of God and man. And there is no evidence that the citizens in general have a proper sense of the evil of this business, of the guilt which has been contracted by it, and of the displeasure of God for it, or that they have a just abhorrence of it; but there is much evidence of the contrary, and that there is little or no true repentance of it.

In this dark, unpleasant, and melancholy view of the state and character of the body of the inhabitants of this town, I must take my leave, with a painful prospect of the evil which is coming upon them and their posterity; which they would not believe, were they told. To most of them I cannot speak; and if I could, and they should know what I think and say of them, it would only serve to excite the resentment and indignation of the most.

But there is a bright side, to which the Christian may look for support and comfort, in the midst of all this dark and evil state of things, which cannot be too often brought into view. All this sin and wrath of man, and the evils which attend and follow it, will praise Christ, and turn to the greatest good of his kingdom. And all the wicked shall be shaken from the earth, and from this island too; and it shall yet be full of meek, humble, and holy inhabitants, who shall praise the Lord, and delight themselves in the abundance of peace and happiness. Amen. "Alleluia; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

But I must now come nearer home, and, not without sensible and affectionate emotions, take my farewell of the church and congregation in this town with whom I have

lived, ministering to them most of the time, for above thirty years.

When I first came among you, the church was not small, and increased in number; and the congregation appeared to flourish. Above a hundred young persons used to repair to my house at appointed times for religious instruction. But when the war with the British came on, we were, for a time, broken up, and many of us scattered into the country, a number of whom never returned again. In this time, our parsonage-house was destroyed, the bell of the meeting-house was taken away, and the inside of the house was so defaced and destroyed by the enemy, that public worship could not be attended in it; and those who staid in the town during the residence of the British here, and those who went out and returned again, suffered losses in their worldly interest. By these events, and by the deaths that have taken place, both on the land, and of the men who have used the sea, we are become few in number, and in a degree poor in worldly circumstances. Most of the church and congregation which were on the stage when I first came here are gone to the grave. But the greatest calamity of all is, the good people who have deceased have none, or very few, to succeed them, and fill up their places, and have left us in a great and awful degree destitute of the power and practice of true religion. In these dark and disagreeable circumstances, I now take my leave of you; yet with a hope, though a faint one, that after I am gone God will build you up, and grant you and your children greater spiritual blessings than you have had while I have been with you.

I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God, so far as I have understood what it was. In doing this, I am sensible I have preached and published doctrines which are very offensive and odious to many, though I hope to but few if any of you. I have opposed evil practices, by which I have incurred the displeasure and resentment of many; and have taught and inculcated duties, and an experimental, practical religion, which consists most essentially in self-denial, as the only way to heaven, which are disagreeable to many, and not believed to be true. Some of the doctrines which I have preached and published have been opposed from the press and the pulpit, and more privately, and have not been understood, and represented as horrible and mischievous, tending to destroy all true religion. But all this has no impression on me, to excite the least doubt of the truth of the doctrines so opposed, or to incline me to cease to assert and vindicate them. I have such clear and full conviction, and unshaken confidence,

that the doctrines which I have for a long course of years preached and maintained are the truths contained in the Bible, that I stand as a brazen wall, unhurt, and not moved by all the shafts of opposition and reproach which have been levelled at me and the system of truth and religion which I have espoused; being assured that it will stand forever, and certain, beyond a doubt, from Scripture, reason, and experience, that a cordial belief and love of these truths, with religious exercises and conduct agreeable to them, is connected with salvation, and is a sufficient ground of support and comfort under the greatest trials, and in the nearest view of death and eternity. On this foundation I cheerfully rest my eternal interest, which indeed is infinite, and invite all to do the same.

To you, therefore, my dear people, both old and young, as a dying man, and in the view of a judgment and eternity to come, I recommend the religion which I have endeavored to preach and inculcate among you for a number of years, and to exemplify in practice, both publicly, more privately, and in secret. Being assured that he only is safe and happy who is a real Christian, I recommend Christ to you with my dying breath as the only refuge for sinners; for "he that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

Finally, I take my leave of all my acquaintance, friends, and relatives, whether nearer or farther off, wishing they may all partake of the saving blessings of the gospel; and if I have any enemies, I forgive them, and wish to them the same blessings. To my kind benefactors I wish the abundant rewards promised in the Word of God to the charitable and bountiful, even to all who give so much as a cup of cold water to any of the professed disciples of Christ, because they belong to him. To my particular *Christian friends*, in whom has been my chief delight, and who, I have often said, are my greatest treasure on earth, I leave my best wishes, with a fond and animating hope of living forever with you in the most intimate, perfect, and uninterrupted friendship. Amen.

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